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Umberto Saba

[The poet Umberto Saba, who died on September 7th, was born in Trieste in 1883, when Trieste was still a city of the Hapsburg Empire. To be born in Trieste in 1883, he once wrote, was, from a cultural point of view, like being born somewhere else in 1850. He meant of course, somewhere else in Italy, because by virtue of language, culture and sentiment, he was, as were all the writers of his generation in Trieste, profoundly attached to his country. He spent the years between 1908 and 1920 almost entirely in Italy, returning to Trieste only when it became an Italian city. However, the isolation of his origin that forced him to live as a foreigner, so to speak, in his own country, coupled with his natural detachment and timidity, kept him far from the literary fashions of the day: from the noisy Futurism, from the more important literary movement of the review "La Voce." Although he contributed to this review, he remained utterly aloof from the ideas that inspired it. Thus his verses, which he began to write at the height of D'Annunzio's influence, when echoes of the subtle evocations of Pascoli and the ironic melancholy of the decadent poets were still alive and strong, appeared as an isolated phenomenon. His poetry, so simple and close to life, gradually conquered more and more ground, and along with Ungaretti and Montale, Saba eventually became one of the most widely read poets of our generation. The critics, with the sole important exception of Alfredo Gargiulo, were always favorable to him. Saba began his career writing of his sadness at existing in this world, but transformed his song into, as he himself said, a sort of declaration of gratitude toward life. Sorrow and joy, love of self and love of others, even of the humblest animals that inhabit the earth, sensuality and religious tenderness for all things of this world, are bound inseparably together in verses to all appearances modest and traditional, but which grew ever more persuasive in the reader's memory. The following poems of Saba are part of a forthcoming volume *The Promised Land and Other Poems*, an anthology of four contemporary Italian Poets introduced by Sergio Pacifici (with a foreword by Henri Peyre—New York, S. Vanni), to be published in December. The translations are by Professor Thomas G. Bergin of Yale University and by Frederick Mortimer Clapp.]

To My Wife

You are like a chicken,
a young white chicken.
Wind ruffs its feathers as it bends to drink,
as it scratches in the dust.
But, when, breast lifted, it struts about proudly
across the grass,
it moves with your slow and queenlike step.
It is braver than the rooster.
So are all the females
of all animals
that in their serenity
are close to God.
And, if my eyes, my judgment do not mislead me
you have your equal among such as they are;
and in no other woman.

When evening makes the little hens drowsy
the cheeping peep of their voices reminds me
of your sweet voice,
when now and then you complain of your troubles
unaware
that in your voice there is the hen-coop's
sad and mild music.

You are like a pregnant heifer
happy still, still unburdened,
even gay.
If you stroke her she will turn her head,
her neck with a rosiness tenderly tinged;
and, if you meet her and listen to her loving,
so piteous is the sound
you'll pull up a bunch of grass to give her;
and that's how I offer my gifts to you
when you are sad.

You are like a long little bitch
which has such sweetness in her eyes
yet in her heart is so fierce, so brave.
Lying at your feet she seems a saint
all afire with invincible fervor,
her gaze turned up to look at you

as to her Lord and God.
But, when about the house and in the street
she follows at your heels,
if anyone even so much as tries
to come near you
she shows her gleaming teeth,
hurt in her jealous love.

You are like a timid rabbit.
In its narrow cage
when it catches sight of you
it gets up on its hind legs, pushing
out at you
motionless tall ears,
begging you to bring it radishes and refuse.
And, if you don't, it curls up on itself
trying to hide in a corner's darkness.
Who would again take away from it that food?
Who would ever take the fur
it plucks from its back
to line the nest
where someday it will bring forth its young?

You are like a swallow that returns with the Spring
and is gone in Autumn.
Only as yet you have not that art.
But this you have of the swallow's ways:
swift light motions;
and this besides,
that to me who felt so old and who was old
you foretold another Spring.

You are like the frugal ant
grandma talks about to the baby
when, hand in hand, they go to the country.
So too in the bee I often refind you,
and in all the females
of all the animals
that in their serenity
are close to God;
and in no other woman.

Translated by F. M. Clapp

The Goat

I have spoken with a goat.
She was alone in the meadow, tied to a post.
Satiated with grass and her coat
rain sodden, she was bleating.
The incessant bleat I felt blending
with my own grief and I answered,
in mockery first and then after
(for sorrow timeless unending
has but one unvarying note)
because of the message that came
borne over the field from the goat.
From the goat with semitic muzzle
I heard the lamenting
of all living things and their trouble.

Translated by T. G. Bergin

Ulysses

From the days of youth I remember sailing
past the Dalmatian shore; the rugged islets
came forth from the waves. On them, but rarely,
sea birds, intent on prey, would alight; the beaches,
kelp-encrusted, gave slippery footing. Under
the sun they sparkled, bright as emeralds.
The tide rising or the dark blotting them out,
barks bearing leeward gave them berth,
fleeing their treachery. And now my kingdom
is that land of No-man. The harbor kindles
its light for others. I turn out to sea,
once more impelled by heart untamed and love,
laden with sorrow, of the life of man.

Translated by T. G. Bergin

The Place of Goldoni

by

G. A. CIBOTTO

[Carlo Goldoni has been honored, on the 250th anniversary of his birth, in his native Venice, by various theatrical companies from all over Europe, acting in their own languages (see *Italian Quarterly* I, 2, *Items*). Though still widely performed in Europe Goldoni as a writer still presents problems by no means finally solved; recent Soviet interpretations, reading class-consciousness into Goldoni's texts, may be cited as extreme instances. An article presenting the Goldoni case in a manner which takes all new approaches into account seemed highly desirable; G. A. Cibotto, both for regional and temperamental inclinations an ardent student of the vernacular Venetian theater, is ideally equipped to provide such an estimate. Among Cibotto's recent work we may cite the *Antologia popolare* of modern Italian poetry (*Italian Quarterly*, I, 2, *Books*) and his edition of Ruzzante's *Dialoghi* (Einaudi, 1955). A volume of studies of the Italian popular theater is in preparation.]

Theatrical life and literary debate were lively in the eighteenth century Venetian milieu as Goldoni knew it. Carlo Gozzi's opposition to Goldoni is one of the most famous episodes of the period. It seemed appropriate to complement an article on Goldoni with a new view of Gozzi; hence Miss Martin's revaluation of the colorful and not too well known author of the *Fiabe*.]

A critical revaluation of Goldoni's work, on this the 250th anniversary of his birth, should avoid the commonplace remarks suggested by such an occasion. Rather, it should choose as its point of departure the judgment of the French poet Chénier: "Goldoni himself belonged to the revolution."

Chénier demonstrated an exact and proper comprehension of the source of inspiration which was able to nourish a complex and weighty opus, such as Goldoni's, stretching in so many directions. Goldoni, in fact, did not ignore any milieu or social class, with the exception of the

clergy and religious themes. These he had to bypass for a precise reason: "Comedy drinks from a deep spring; but some of the richer rivulets cannot be touched, and often it is necessary to suffer famine in the midst of abundance." In greater measure Chénier showed a very penetrating intuition of this same source, of its deepest vein, of its most vibrant and deeply felt struggle, realized in poetic form.

Even further than Chénier went Voltaire with his firm statement that Goldoni had indeed painted nature ("La nature a dit, sans feinte:/Tout auteur a ses défauts/Mais ce Goldoni m'a peinte.") To paint nature, in fact, does not mean or imply a meek surrender in the face of suggestive local colors. On the contrary, it implies an earnestness which can never become moral collusion with the milieu and the society of a given historical period. This is particularly so if the society and the period happen to be those of the Venetian Republic toward the end of the 17th century. At that time the ascendancy of the new commercial power of France, Holland and England pointed to the end of Venice's intermediary role between East and West. This political and economic crisis, codified by the peace of Passarowitz, was reflected with violent immediacy in the social structure. Here the nobility survived by grasping on to political patronage, and the middle class, with fervent initiative and daring, gradually opened the door to the new current which was already stirring half of Europe.

I say gradually, because the Venetian state rested upon a broad oligarchical basis restricted to the aristocratic class. This class, through its more sensitive elements had succeeded in entering, vitally at times, into the European cultural revival. Nevertheless, it tolerated the survival of old and inadequate institutions that permitted the more retrograde elements to persist along political lines which had long since been superseded.

In other ways, too, Venice was a city in full decadence, living on its ancient credit and without energy or vigor. Internationally, perhaps, it could still count on a solid diplomatic tradition, but internally, the imminence of its doom could not escape the attentive and careful eye. Further confirmation of this is found in the formalism behind

which the ruling classes had entrenched themselves. They prohibited any attempt at criticism, and struck down inexorably whoever dared to speak out on political or religious matters. With numberless coffee-houses, innumerable gambling places, houses of ill-repute, convents turned into rendez-vous, the Venetians had turned night into day. From all over Europe pleasure seekers flocked to Venice, and Casanova was able to state: "There is no distinction between the nobles and the people, the princes and the subjects, the extraordinary and the ordinary, the beautiful and the horrible. There are no longer either magistrates or laws in effect." The winter escapades of Carnival time, which have nourished an entire literature, alternated with the pleasant summer vacations in the beautiful villas along the river Brenta. In this climate of carefree unawareness and folly the days passed. This situation, this moral collapse, were not confined to the city but extended to the mainland territories. Moreover, at least in the first half of the century, a widespread apparent economic well-being, which extended to the city and rural classes, helped to prevent an informed awareness. In short, in mere appearances, the Venetian Republic still offered a picture of splendor and opulence, while deep and relentless erosion gnawed at its roots.

Carlo Goldoni, of a middle class family, son of a doctor, happened to be born in such an environment. This, because of his strong intuition and because of his acute insight, meant that he was committed from the beginning. Committed in a moral sense, of course, because the elements of the unavoidable decline could not escape his spirit and his unruly fantasy, even if his development had not been sustained by intellectual anguish or by daily acquaintance with problems of the time, but rather by a singular vocation for the stage. As he openly admitted in the "Preface to the Comedies," published in 1750: "Although I have not neglected reading the more respected and famous authors from whom, as from good teachers, one cannot but draw very useful teachings and examples, nevertheless the books on which I have mostly meditated and which I shall never regret having perused, were the 'world' and the 'theater'. The first shows me so many and varied charac-

ters, depicts them for me so naturally that they seem purposely created to provide me with abundant plots for pleasant instructive comedies. . . [the second] instructs me in the vices and the defects which are most common in our century and in our country, and which deserve the disapproval of wise men."

This may be surprising in a man as temperate and orderly in appearance as he was, or at least seemed, according to the superficial behavior, the conventional patterns acknowledged by public opinion. (Still there are people who accuse him of being of limited ideas, narrow-minded, in view of his indirect manner of participating in the desire for renewal, in the current ideas, of the period.) Instead, the task of peering into that general carefree attitude verging on the cliché, of circumscribing a concept of life which, having approached its end, seemed even more refined and attenuated, fell to his satire, to his sly bonhomie. But beneath this patina of cheerfulness, under the guise of amusement and respectful to the forms of traditional myth, he let shine through the ultimate elements of a courageous and unprejudiced condemnation. In fact, as objective critics, we should say that in his works there are indeed present noteworthy forewarnings of the potential upheavals and demands which later exploded with extreme violence. I would add, as Benedetto Croce said: "The tendencies of social life of that time (moralism, tender sensitivity, reform) had to be expressed. The times were ripe, through their own historical and philosophical development, for the comedy of manners and of social observation." The fact that he served as a catalyst, as an interpreter, would indicate that without being a man of new ideas, Goldoni was able to be the interpreter of manners generated by new ideas. Recent criticism in its attempt to reexamine and re-discuss the problem of Goldoni's reform, which until a few years ago was perhaps accepted in terms excessively academic, has gone too far. It has relegated it exclusively to Goldoni's youth and has considered it solely as the result of the strain of controversy, a supposition denied by actual events and by the author's art. A careful rereading of the *Mémoires*, written between his 66th and 80th birthdays, in

a rapid, direct style, full of charm and subtle humor, is further proof of this assertion.

Besides, a careful study reveals that the development and refinement of his art coincided with the more definite triumph of a theatrical decorum able to express the aspirations of a more modern theory of the theater. Of course, this reform of his (one must not give excessive weight to the anti-literary and anti-classical form of his works) took its place within a movement which attempted, from the beginning of the century, to free comedy from the artificial limitations of the popular theater. However, Goldoni's spontaneity arises from a vital and direct contact with life complemented by a truly unique knowledge and experience of the stage. Indeed, these very elements justify the slow and methodical ripening of his reform, his cautious progress. Even more, they explain, along with his rejection of the improvised comedy, his acceptance of all that which, in the realm of acting, of imagination, of inventiveness, of technical ability, had meant for dramatic art a true and actual step forward. So true is this that one can say of Goldoni's work that, practically speaking, it continued the *commedia dell'arte*, freeing it of its mechanical and commonplace elements and raising it to a plane of nobility and literary validity. As is well known, when he began to write for the stage, improvised comedy still held sway and the actors, as masks, improvised the dialogue. All the author had to do was to write the scenario, that is to say, a plot of the action outlined by scenes. Goldoni, on the contrary, imposed on the public and on the actors a comedy completely written out, a comedy of character, with types taken from everyday life, and not fixed and stereotyped as the masks were. In this he was perhaps helped by his use of dialects (he used them in eleven works; the others are in Italian, even in Martellian verse, or partly in dialect and partly in Italian), and by his practical and sympathetic acquaintance with society. Obviously, in order to understand the import of the break effected by Goldoni, and to be able to measure its consequences, one must go back to the conditions of the theater in that period.

Perhaps we ought to go back to that stormy evening during the Carnival of 1707, when a young Italian actor, Luigi Riccoboni (son of Antonio Rigobon, a Venetian, who went down in the history of the Italian and French theater with the nickname of Lelio, from the mask he portrayed) staged at the San Luca theater his tragedy *Tito Manlio*, derived from a melodrama of Noris. He did so with the avowed and declared purpose of renovating the dramatic theater in Italy. In fact, if the conditions of the *commedia dell'arte* were pitiful, not less precarious were those of the theater itself. Debased by the ignorance of the actors (who were vulgar hacks, without imagination or culture), or by the lack of scripts, the repertoire consisted almost exclusively of rehashings from the French and Spanish theater or of squalid presentations of our own masterpieces put together haphazardly without any serious intent. If an actor felt the necessity of reviving completely a type of drama fallen into decadence, it meant that to all intents and purposes the popular literary tradition of the Renaissance had died out. Riccoboni was lucky because his unfortunate attempt, *Tito Manlio*, which failed miserably amid the insults of the spectators, led him through his persistence to the triumph of Maffei's *Merope*, and later to Paris. He went there at the invitation of the Duke of Orleans and brought back the old prestige to the Théâtre des Italiens.

It seems certain that to carry out and bring to a conclusion his reform, centered, as I pointed out, on the rejection of the worn-out scenarios, on contact with reality, and on a new rhythm of activity demanded of the actors, Goldoni directed his first and major efforts toward the performance of the actors and toward the public. The former unwilling, if not altogether opposed, were forced to give up the easy way out through the comic solutions until then fashionable, and were obliged to remain within the lines of a dialogue completely written out, especially in regard to the development of the characters, even at the cost of sacrificing their own personality. The second had to be shaken out of the laziness condoned by custom and made aware of the prevailing low level of acting. Fortunately, the moral adhesion, and particularly the taste of the public, almost imme-

diately gave way, and the better elements in it, reacting against the diffidence of a frightened minority, encouraged the attempts of the writer and of the Medebacs. Naturally Goldoni, through his fine psychological insight, was always able to understand what the public wanted, and tried to keep it as happy as possible. It is sufficient to recall what he tells us in the *Putta onorata* about the gondoliers who turn from being detractors, perennially expressing their dissent, to enthusiastic admirers. It was, in fact, exactly from this urgency to communicate with the public, from a conscious necessity of a cordial and understanding relationship, that the famous wager of "sixteen new comedies in one year" was born. A bold challenge, indeed, in the face of Chiari's provocations, of the public's temper after the fiasco of the *Erede fortunato*, and of the uncertain fate of the company. "Amazed, and conscious of my own merit, I wrote the thank-you lines for the leading lady. In bad verses, but very clearly, I had her say that the author undertook, on her behalf and on behalf of her associates, to present in the following year sixteen new comedies. The company and the public gave me a very flattering proof of their trust. The company leaders, on my word, renewed the contracts and in eight days all the boxes were rented even for the following year. When I made this commitment I had not thought of a single subject; my friends trembled, my enemies laughed. I comforted the first and I mocked the second."

The first act of this production, unique in the history of world theater, was to be called *Comic Theater*. Besides being the outline of a program, it revealed itself as a treatise on dramatic art, containing the principles which inspired the author. Obviously, from the point of view of stylistic maturity the level did not remain the same. In the *Bugiardo* and in *Bottega del Caffè*, in the *Poeta fanatico* and in *Pamela* or in the *Avvocato onorato*, to mention only some of the more successful, the level of felicity of expression is quite different, inconstant. Nevertheless, in spite of the failure of certain works, and the haphazard and quick conception of others, the end result was the triumphant and festive epilogue of the *Pettegolezzi delle donne*. On the eve-

ning of the premiere of this work he was carried in triumph from his box backstage where a large crowd gathered to express its admiration. But it is not solely on the basis of the miraculous exploits of one season that the literary production of Goldoni may be considered among the greatest (even quantitatively) in Italian literary history, for all its inexhaustible vitality and creative force. After all, his bibliography can boast of a long list of works from his early youth on. He began, in fact, with a tragedy to be put to music, *Amalasunta*. He carried its manuscript locked in his suitcase during his flight to Milan in 1732, only to throw it into the flames in the following spring. This was followed, in the period between 1734 and 1747, by tragicomedies, melodramas and interludes.

True, genuine comedy came into being only later, after 1738, although still in an embryonic form, that is, still reflecting the custom of the scenarios: so much so, that one is tempted to consider it a marginal activity in relation to his tragic works. Undoubtedly, this presents us with only a secondary Goldoni; still, in terms of his experience and of his production, it had notable importance. Consider, for example, the two contrasting elements around which his art will successively develop and mature: realistic spirit and morality. Furthermore, one cannot help but notice the sureness and vivacity of the dialogue, the sharpness of the characters well developed and consistent. The year which marks the point of arrival is 1748. In fact, between 1748 and 1750 appeared *La vedova scaltra*, *La famiglia dello antiquario*, *La bottega del caffè*, *Il bugiardo*. All perfect works in construction and technique. Besides confirming the continuity with the world of the commedia dell'arte, these reveal the author's capacity to reconstruct an atmosphere, a milieu, through his analytic, penetrating powers of observation. Unfortunately, they fail somewhat in the attempt to portray humanity, and the moralistic rigor seems at times pushed into the background. For this reason, to the above works, though praiseworthy, one should prefer others such as *La putta onorata* and *La buona moglie*. Both of these belong to the same period and are somewhat less successful in articulation and structural completeness. How-

ever, they reveal, in the author's approach, a taste no longer external in its typicality, bordering on the picturesque, but rather a depth of feeling which colors and lightens up, here and there, those traits of the characters dear to him, of the figures whom he envisions with fullest depth—characters and figures, lest we forget, that are always drawn from the middle classes, devoid of extreme gestures, inclined toward average behavior and moderation. More or less within these limits, emphasizing one element or another, are also the works immediately following: *Il padre di famiglia* of 1750, *I pettegolezzi delle donne* of 1751, and the graceful and festive *Campiello* written in 1756.

Here his moralism sounds at times rhetorical, while his sentimentalism seems false. But in the happiest moments one can already feel his force of synthesis which between the two poles of ironic goodness and heart-rending tenderness, succeeds in balancing the various parts and harmonizing all elements into a whole. In this light the character of *Mirandolina* was conceived and *La locandiera*, generally considered one of his most celebrated and successful works (written in 1753), was created. However, his best constructed plays are those written between 1760 and 1762, after a brief Roman interlude. *I rusteghi*, *La casa nova*, *Sior Todaro Brontolon*, and *Le baruffe chiozzotte*, are the masterpieces of this period which could be defined as his period of grace. Never as in these plays was his psychological skill able to find such solutions, suggest such subtle and properly emphasized shadings, to modulate the tones of the conflicts and situations. Add to this the rhythm, particularly in *Le baruffe chiozzotte*, where local color becomes poetic reality, and is accompanied by a language wholly invented, with overtones of Chioggiotto dialect. It is a language which resolves itself into a myriad of colors, vivacious and forceful, as if creating a musical cadenza. It is free of philological pretense and it is solely intended to cleave to a popular world, to an authentic substance. He achieved effects of fresh immediacy and of sanguine violence. His modest concept of love, his strong sense of justice, his social controversy, and his innate goodness, offer us an ample and harmonious picture of the history of a

town, of a sea-faring people, to the point of becoming a great and unsurpassed "piscatory symphony". Yet he never indulges in clownish efforts, he never resorts to mechanical or pedantic solutions. On the contrary, he achieves caricature by, if anything, an excess of seriousness. Thus, perhaps, for the first time in the history of Italian drama, we have a theatre which presents a whole society, which reflects it "like a singing mirror".

Too bad his "full season" lasted hardly two years. With his departure for the French capital, which brought him into another world, it became a pale echo, noticeable only occasionally, at intervals. In fact, his Parisian sojourn, the ensuing alternation of melancholy, uncertainty and memories, marks the beginning of his decadence, of his emotional death. Because of local demands he was forced, among other things, to return to the scenarios of his youth. Indeed, it is hard to understand how in such a psychological condition he was able to complete *Il ventaglio*, written in 1765, which represents a true example of outstanding ability. It was the last flash.

In 1771, to overcome the obstinate persistence of his following, which insisted on considering him an exponent of the commedia dell'arte, he tried his hand at the comedy of character with *Le bourru bienfaisant* and later with *L'avare fastueux*. These two works, although they were received with favor and general approval, still betray in him intentions and purposes entirely apart from poetic considerations. Perhaps the latter had already become exhausted at the time of his bitter farewell to his native city, his spiritual matrix, which had until then nourished his inspiration and enriched his creative palette. As to the quality and validity of Goldoni's art, there still prevail doubts, perplexities and even reservations. Several critics, in fact, have been extremely severe as regards Goldoni's love for truth and reality. They insist on considering his realism feeble and questionable, and regard it as tainted by sentimentalism and conventionality. They seem to forget that his purpose "not to spoil nature" was followed and should not be interpreted strictly from the realistic point of view, but in a wider sense. The weakness of his wavering between abstract

idealism and his plain attachment to things, even vulgar at times, is born exactly of this misunderstanding. But in Goldoni's time it could only mean a liberation from certain stage patterns rendered sterile by lifeless conventions. It is in this sense that his attraction to the order of nature must be interpreted, his need for immediacy which attaches every character born of his imagination to a particular social group, whose influence is obvious, while at the same time we have a picture of the society and of the situation of the character within it. Furthermore, it is within these limits that we must analyze his characterization of the real; that is, the transition which occurs in his work from the time of his acceptance of objective data to the time of the dramatic creation. The latter, as is well known, must be markedly characterized to attract the public's attention. His search for the typical in nature occasionally leads him to caricature, the last stage in a process of decline, but this apparent turning from the realistic path is dictated by the exigencies of the stage. Finally, his anti-rhetorical taste, his natural inclination toward simplicity, rescue him from the dangers of withdrawal inward and prevent his abandonment of reality.

We should not pay too much attention to the other negative attitude concerning Goldoni's lack of literary background and the incorrectness of his language (someone has even spoken of lack of style). First of all, one should note that Goldoni wrote in two languages: Venetian, the official language of his country, and to him very congenial, so that he was able to achieve rare effects of expressive power; and Italian, derived from that conglomeration of languages substantially dialectal which existed in 18th-century Italy. This derivation was carried out in such a way that it could be transformed into dialogue valid for all audiences of the various regions where actors erected, in the evening, their nomadic and rickety stages. Secondly, we should note that the style of his language had to be functional, agile, fluid, because it was meant for dialogue. If at times the preoccupation with literary elaboration seems to belong to a mental and cultural refinement foreign to him, the truth is somewhat different. Along with the prac-

tical necessity of acting quickly, of delivering the necessary scripts for the vast repertoire of plays required by a theatrical season in those days, there was also the urgency of streamlining a high-flown idiom, weighed down by formalism and no longer able to satisfy the public's new taste.

If we examine carefully the Venetian texts, that is, those creations in which his vein runs free and overflows with fulness, we notice immediately that in his constant adherence to social rank and place, he continually assimilates, filters, and elaborates in a medium of mature linguistic awareness. And this without abusing the provincial element of the so called "local color". Instead, he tends to achieve full theatrical expressiveness through a delicate balance of shadings and elaborate mixtures. This should not be surprising, because in Goldoni the necessity of using the dialect (I should rightly say language, since Venetian is a true and proper language) is not the consequence of a tradition. A few years before, this same tradition had boasted of such names as Calmo, Giancarli and Ruzzante. But in Goldoni this necessity arises from an inner feeling, from the need to delve more deeply into the surrounding reality, and to become identified with genuine popular currents, the true propelling forces in 18th-century Venice. Disregarding the petty and pedantic judgment of Niccolò Tommaseo, a terribly conformist man of letters, who in the footsteps of Carrer (first critic of Goldoni worthy of the name) conceded the authenticity of Goldoni's language, let us turn to De Sanctis. In spite of some reservations and lack of understanding, the latter wrote: "He saw clearly that to give new life to words it was necessary to work not on the words but on the content of the words, and create again an inner world of expression."

Going farther than De Sanctis, one could add another critical observation. In considering the dramatic evolution in Goldoni, one can see how, little by little, a maturing process takes place, a progressive refinement which goes hand in hand with an ever increasing mastery of a refined and sensitive stage technique. But about Goldoni there remains another misunderstanding perhaps even greater than the other, and sanctioned by the authority of men of letters

worthy of esteem and consideration: namely, that his poetic world develops within limits of composure and commonplace never upset by the urgency of overwhelming passions or by idealism. Thus, it would follow that he could be compared to Metastasio, poet of inert and polished elegance. On the contrary, as it has been pointed out, in Goldoni "there is never the descriptive complacency of the frustrated playwright who uses his characters to paint pictures." One could add that in his works one always finds a persistent vein of sadness, a thin thread of introverted nostalgia which, lightly but perceptibly, veils his pages, constituting at the same time its flaw and its charm. It is indeed surprising that such a critic as De Sanctis, and with him many more, did not understand Goldoni, and uttered judgments which still weigh upon the great Venetian author.

As a justification for De Sanctis we might recall his particular concept of comedy, since "that divine melancholy which is the ideal of comedy" implies a formulation of a romantic poetics. But even if someone tended to see within the harmonious world of Goldoni's balance, flashes of restless pre-romantic poetry, we must admit that, faithful to his times, Goldoni remained an optimist. Hence his comedy does not turn about the performance alone. It fulfills an educational function, in a wide sense, inspired not so much by rigid moral principles, as by the tolerant and logical dictates of common sense: the same common sense which continually compels him to avoid loud, exasperated tones, pedantic or extremely tragic efforts, and which restrains him within the limits of median composure, where feelings harmonize with reason. This does not mean that in him sentimental outbursts are not to be found, severe self-examinations, or dramatic accents. However, a certain "magic spell" always leads him back on the path of moderation and self-control, allowing them to die out gradually through the rhythm of a modulated musicality. I have touched on the musical element of Goldoni's comedies. Let us then attempt to clarify the attention given by him to the wise insertions of dialogue, flashing out quickly to break a thick silence, to the orchestrated fusion of voices and repartee in choral movements. This implies a knowledge of coun-

terpoint, carried to extremes of playfulness, to the timid and sad cadenzas of the finales, which always vanish gradually into a feeling of lightness. Even more let us stop to analyze the contributions of interludes and of dramatic and jocose melodramas created by Goldoni's fantasy under the stimulus of an impulse rather than of critical awareness. Certainly, to outline the relationship between Goldoni the libretto writer and Goldoni the playwright, to determine the importance of the various influences, and at the same time the intrinsic value of the librettos in relation to the development of comic opera of the time, is no easy task; first, because of the vastness of the undertaking, and secondly because, as of today, all the necessary research has not been carried out nor have all the necessary critical problems been determined. This is not intended to minimize the contributions of such scholars as Spinelli, Wiel, Fiorino, Caffi, and particularly Musatti. They have undoubtedly established the foundation for a systematic and definitive analysis, which becomes more and more necessary and, in view of Goldoni's vast achievement, not easily postponed.

If we add to the seventy works gathered by the publisher Zatta under the title of *Drammi giocosi*, the fifteen interludes published by Ortolani, and the reworkings noticed by Musatti, we have a total of eighty-eight. I don't mean by this that statistical data or continuity of production should affect the restrained judgment concerning his librettos, especially if we recall the author's own statement on this matter. He confesses to the hurry and pressure engendered by deadlines, and to his reliance on experience: "They are not well written dramas, and they could not be. I never thought of writing them by vocation or by choice. I worked at them from a sense of obligation and sometimes for gain." Aside from the facility of plot and the rudimentary simplicity of the various characters, they were hampered by the lack of sureness in the language. Goldoni himself, as was pointed out, did not recognize these structural weaknesses. Admitting, on the other hand, that they were "jokes in which the writers were trying to serve music rather than their own purpose . . . not paying atten-

tion to the development of characters, of the plot, of the truth, as one ought to do in good faith", or conceding that they were hastily written in a few days and "at the command of persons of authority". Still they never completely lack, even the worst ones, the vivacity of a witty remark, the refreshing joyfulness of a well sketched vignette, and especially in those in dialect, the glow of the language which unfolds in witty and irresistible lines.

It cannot be denied that *the* masterpiece, with unity, autonomy, and intrinsic value, never came forth in this field. Indeed, if it had it would no longer have been a libretto, a work subject to the creations of others, doomed to serve for a particular circumstance, at the very best a pretext for musical invention. A masterpiece would have been a true and real comedy. The positive aspects of Goldoni's contribution to the comic opera of his time are to be found elsewhere, particularly in the elements of pathos introduced to check the overwhelming comic element and very skilfully mixed in with it. Della Corte, in his excellent essay on the 18th-century melodrama states: "After 1780 the *larmoyante* tendencies timidly introduced by Goldoni became prevalent." In this the Italian playwright reveals truly renovating tendencies which reach the pinnacle of jocose comedy with Paisiello's *Socrate immaginario*. It is in this light that we must consider his contribution to the historical development of the musical melodrama. At first he did not arouse the interest of contemporary composers, yet later the exploitation of his texts reached a considerable figure. In the 18th century the number was well above fifty, boasting very illustrious and famous names such as Mozart (who at fifteen, in 1768, composed the opera *La finta semplice* on a libretto by Goldoni, adapted by Mario Coltellini), Galuppi, Vivaldi, Paisiello, Haydn, Salieri, Lampugnani, Scarlatti, and Cimarosa. Unfortunately none of these composers (with the exception of Mozart, who in *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *The Magic Flute*, was able to transmute the farcical elements into enchanting stylization) succeeded in crystallizing the flashes of inspiration and insight which appeared occasionally in

their works. Thus, Goldoni was denied the chance to enter into the history of music in absolute terms of full artistic realization, as a libretto writer able to inspire a masterpiece. Hence, if his contribution to the history of Italian comic opera in the 18th century cannot be forgotten, on the higher plane of musical art his name remains in the background.

Perhaps his experiences as a libretto writer may be said to have served him in relation to his reform. I mean the exclusion of improvisation and of extemporaneity to which he was forced in the musical melodrama by its necessity of harmony, of fusion, of synchronization of voices, instruments, scenes and orchestra. For him, hampered in his first comedies and comic parts by the expedients and stage habits of the *commedia dell'arte*, this was undoubtedly a first step in the direction of change, at least in technique. In this respect dates may be helpful in tracing the evolution between the year 1739 in which he wrote *Il Momolo cortesan*, and the year 1743, in which he composed in its entirety *La donna di garbo*. The latter was still closely connected, for many reasons, to the *commedia dell'arte*, but structurally it was different. Of course, in interpreting the texts one must not force them to the point of doing them violence. Rather, one should correlate them with the inklings, the traces, and the statements which Goldoni himself left us in his introduction, letters and, for the specific subject of libretto writing, in his *Mémoires*, his only narrative work.

In fact, along with Goldoni the playwright we must also consider Goldoni the narrator. If the *Mémoires* can be regarded, as many people do, in the light of its documentary or descriptive character, one cannot disregard its poetic expression. Considering also the theatrical productions of the same period, one easily notices that they are distinguished by the same traits of the Parisian period. The spontaneity and the naturalness, free of any academic impediments, have called to mind to more than one critic Cellini's life, and the *Mémoires* have often been called the first specimen of prose of a new era. Divided into three parts, the *Mémoires*, in the first section, relate with brilliant

vivacity and casualness the events of Goldoni's life from his birth to the time of his contract with Medebac in Venice. As has been said aptly, in its crisp and agile pages "is vividly portrayed the artificial culture of a wretched age, in which the indolent upper class either wasted its scant energy in comic opera wars, in petty intrigues of little courts, or wasted its time in ladies' boudoirs. Meanwhile, the humble peasants were oppressed by tax collectors or robbed by soldiers." A whole world is brought to life in it, and it acquires therefore an historical interest as well. The second part, however, in which the author proposes to write the history of his comedies, is definitely inferior. The extremely elaborate analysis of the plots, the exaggerated and wordy chronicle of the jealousies and mishaps which arose in connection with his works, end by disappointing and letting down the reader. Furthermore, he lacks the graceful humor and that fine sense of self-criticism which distinguish his better pages. Even in the third part, devoted to episodes and reflections upon his Parisian period, one misses the freshness and the enthusiasm of the opening part.

It is amazing, indeed, that a man of his greatness and stature, should waste his time listing through whole chapters the nuptials or the festivities of the royal family, or other mundane events of his time, and never notice the subterranean activity which was undermining the old institutions and preparing the way for revolutionary violence. This is even stranger if we think that in a work such as *Pamela* (more vibrant, on a more human plane, and more dramatically heartrending than Richardson's novel, or than *Nanine* by Voltaire, derived from it) are foreshadowed certain sentiments of which Rousseau was later to be the spokesman. According to a prevalent opinion, he was forced into this political wisdom by his fear of receiving a *lettre de cachet*, or of losing the pension he received periodically from the king of France or from the Duchy of Parma. (One might also recall that the *Mémoires* saw the light with the backing of the royal family and prominent figures of the court.)

To those fears I would also add as a dominant factor his particular development and his temperament. Obviously, in this respect we must widen our perspective, and to obtain an exact understanding and evaluation, we must consider all those elements which pertain to Goldoni's relationship with the society of his time. Let us begin with his attitude toward religion, a subject which he particularly ignored except in certain superficial allusions, such as his remarks about the convent in *Il padre di famiglia*. But if the danger of hurting religious feelings was due to the protection accorded by law to the Church, which had in fact, if not by right, succeeded in creating the conditions for a state religion, let us look at Goldoni's attitude toward political power. Here we come upon an image of Goldoni dear to certain Marxist critics (it is not without significance that in the countries behind the iron curtain his works are performed with praiseworthy frequency) who, by a tour de force, try to change the image of Goldoni the precursor into that of a class-conscious propagandist. But the truth is that Goldoni was a revolutionary within the law, very much concerned with respect for the rules and institutions of the society in which he happened to live. At the same time, he was morally committed to exposing its shortcomings, those symptoms which in his opinion were to be checked and corrected. All this for the sake of general betterment, to guarantee a more peaceful utility, and a more certain future development of the Republic where he certainly did not consider himself an outsider. The truth is that his criticism was not the result of a rigorous moral and social program. Rather, it sprang from a compulsion to demand from the various social groups and classes a respect, out of a sense duty, for what he considered best. He meant the duty of the individual and social conscience, fused into a very clear style and decorum. Within these limits we can circumscribe the import of his satire with its vein of goodness and respectful caution; we can grasp the subtle and disenchanted significance of his accusations, usually veiled by a screen of amusing casualness and jocose invention. This does not imply a restricted moral view on his part or a limited ability to

deepen his scrutiny into the more delicate tissues of the social structure.

We could begin with his enlightened pacifism. In his dramas this took shape as avowed anti-militarism. In the plays, from *L'amante militare* to *La guerra* to *L'impostore*, he was able at times to find very harsh words, branding, for example, mercenary troops as "human flesh merchandise." We could then pass on to his adamant views against the decadence of the noble classes. Thus, whether we consider the brisk and courageous appearance on the scene of the well-mannered caricature represented by Sior Tonin Bella Grazia in the youthful *Frappatore*, or whether we examine the biting satire of the French courtier portrayed under the name of Count Casteldoro in *L'Avare fastueux*, we have a complete gallery of portraits, profiles, cowardly acts, seductions, and corruption. In a clever atmosphere of comedy that allowed him to escape the cuts of the censor, he forced an unwilling ruling class to accept, even if with pretended nonchalance and indifference, a lesson which hurt deeply. At the same time, he shook the lower classes out of their abject and unconscious servility. Thus in a vortex of smiling ups and downs, we see all the "negative myths" of the nobility brought into focus with amiable but unshaken sureness: from the complexities of etiquette reduced to a ridiculous formality of gestures no longer corresponding to a sentiment really felt, from the dependence on French culture, to the polished affectations of dress, to the sugary idiocies of *cicisbeismo*, to the follies of gambling which verged on social mania, to the corruption of manners, especially among women, who had forgotten all restraint. Add to this the impoverished nobles: Goldoni seems unable to forgive them for not being their former selves. He assails them in such exasperated tones, inveighing against them without pity, that they become negative examples to be carefully observed in order to avoid the danger of imitating them.

In antithesis to this panorama of decadence, we find Goldoni praising the middle classes, though not the higher middle class fascinated and blinded by the expensive style of living of the nobility, with which it loved to compete, to

the point of abandoning its own admirable tradition. Goldoni had in mind the lower middle class; the hard working, productive class. If we wanted to find a paradigm of this social concept of Goldoni's our choice should fall on *Le femmine puntigliose* with its dramatic and resentful atmosphere. It is a concept consisting of intercommunicating segments. (Goldoni's middle class origin lead him to treat with deference the dominant élite, but at the same time it did not prevent him from understanding the superiority of the middle class, which, fused with the nobles had, according to Goldoni, nothing to gain). In *Le femmine puntigliose* we see plastically portrayed in action all the social classes, from the nobility lost in a maze of sophisms which cover up its inner emptiness, to the middle class, beleaguered and ruined by its reckless ambition, to the lower classes vibrating with impatient desire for revenge. The motif of the lower classes oppressed by ancient conditions, unworthy of being called civilized, will return with great emphasis in the *Feudatario*. The latter, along with the classical portrayal of the landowner, will offer for the first time a vision of the peasant world rich in dignity and self-awareness; the same vision, after all, which had been presented a century before in popular compositions, in the anonymous ballads of the fishermen from Chioggia and Venice. In Goldoni it is more systematically conceived and transformed from a cry of anguish to a moral accusation. One could also cite *L'adulatore*. Here Goldoni's scope of political diagnosis takes on more decided and firmer boundaries.

It goes without saying that in the evaluation of this human "commitment" one should not insist too much on his status as a precursor. This would give too much emphasis to the secondary, emotional layers, not built on a rational basis of ideas. Such is the case in the naturalism of *Pamela*. Here the famous lines of Madame Jevre ("I have heard it said many times that the world would be more beautiful if men had not spoiled it by upsetting the beautiful order of nature because of their pride. This common mother considers them all equal, but the haughtiness of the powerful disdains the humble. Yet a day will come

when the powerful and the humble will become part of a single class.") have been considered a revolutionary manifesto. The same applies to the dialogue in *Il re della caccia*, in *La Peruviana*, and in *La bella selvaggia*. It is true that the new spirit, the revolutionary fever was present in his works, but only indirectly. So much so that in the satire of *Il filosofo inglese*, he does full justice to certain myths concerning the disadvantages of property ownership. If sympathy constantly prevailed in his portrayal of servants, disregarding the shrunken prototypes established by the masks and making them an expression of human wisdom, this does not imply that he anticipated or that he adhered, ahead of his time, to the socialist teachings of, say, a Saint-Simon. On the other hand this does not mean that his interest in the life of the lower classes was confined within the limits of a search for folklore themes or simply suggested by incidental curiosity. On the contrary, if some novel element is to be found in Goldoni's work, it seems to me to be exactly this closeness to the world of the lower classes. Until Goldoni this world was relegated to a marginal function, generally considered an instrument, a pretext, for a few hours of amusing satire. In Goldoni the popular theme unfolds in its complete and diversified range, changeable and complex with its humorous explosions and its very human problems, acquiring a precise historical significance on the stage. Thus, it becomes the focal point of a spectacle which is not an end in itself, but which reflects faithfully the intimate nuances of a society and the true essence of its substance.

By exploiting popular themes Goldoni found his natural motives, grafting on the roots of truth and novelty his poetic and human message. No wonder, then, that a reactionary such as Carlo Gozzi did not hesitate to resort to political insinuations and to public accusations. Perhaps Gozzi wanted to show that Goldoni's comedies were documents of social corruption, hoping in this way to deprive him of the protection of the nobility and the favor of a large part of the middle classes: "In his stage presentations he had frequently attributed fraud, deceit, and ridicule to his noble characters, and the heroic and generous deeds

to his plebeians, in order to secure the support of the more articulate multitudes." Gozzi went even farther, resorting to calumny and defamation.

Obviously, in the group we have called "lower classes" must be included also the lower and middle bourgeoisie. It was this large group which through its initiative in small industry, commerce, and agriculture, constituted the backbone of the Venetian economy. And this same group was then, and for many decades to follow, the fulcrum on which rested the progress of the Venetian Republic. I daresay that it was from this social class that Goldoni derived the mask of Pantalone, the symbol of a class which, in his own definition, "carried within itself the seeds of progress, not of decline." The same could be said for many other of his characters which verified and characterized with their moral imprint many of his works. These symptoms were, so to speak, in the air; and we could find analogies, perhaps not too evident, in such authors as Baretti, Muratori, Baffo, Casanova, Gozzi, Maggi, Passeroni, and others.

Undermined by the new rationalistic trends, society demanded with ever growing violence and urgency more logical and more just foundations. And it is this very society which, within the physical limits of Venice, Goldoni wanted not to upset but to correct by bringing it back to an ideal measure of civilization. However, in the course of his artistic development and its consequent increasing depth of inspiration, Goldoni's acceptance of an historic time and its secret lessons, eventually expressed itself in a structure and development of greater scope and importance. The final result of Goldoni's work then was not only a lively and sensible understanding of the moral climate and problems of the Venetian republic toward the end of the 18th century, but indeed a true stimulus in accelerating a whole movement still in its formative stages.

In conclusion, we might say that although Goldoni remained outside the revolution, he belongs to the revolution just the same. His spiritual message is that of a man who preferred life itself to a concept of life; who contributed, if not to the chronicle, certainly to the history of

the revolution. It is along this fruitful and still not clearly defined "margin" of Goldoni's work that scholars should direct their research—at least if they wish to avoid the dangers inherent in any "anniversary" writings. They should turn to Goldoni's participation in the ideas of the Venice of his times, and his translation of them into dramatic emotion. They could then hope to reveal an image of Goldoni faithful to his own temperament, to his inner vocation, occasionally veiled by irony or reverie; always obstinately confident in the necessity of art, and fervently attached to popular reality.



Goldoni's Antagonist: Carlo Gozzi, Venetian Fantastist

by

GRETCHEN MARTIN

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This essay is the reflection of an exhaustive revaluation of Count Carlo Gozzi, which Miss Martin is preparing. In it she shows us the inevitable other side of the medal in the Goldoni story, which Gozzi represented.]

Carlo Gozzi was famous in his own day as the author of a handful of dramatic fantasies which he called *fiabe*. Of aristocratic birth, he belonged in spirit to that aspect of the eighteenth century which was classical, conservative, supremely sure of the old values and the old, absolute ways. He hated everything that was modern or commonplace. With his brother Gaspare—a well-known man of letters in his own right—Carlo belonged to a Venetian literary Academy: they called themselves the Granelleschi, the “Inepts”; in this lively company Carlo Gozzi went by the name of *Il Solitario*, “the Solitary”. The name belonged to the man; he was a curious person who spoke little and who walked with his head lowered as though deeply meditating; he liked to wear the same hat year after year, to keep his hair dressed in the same old-fashioned style, to be one of the last gentlemen in Italy to wear a sword. Had he never written a play, his delightful memoirs—which he chose to

call *Memorie inutili*—might have kept some fame for him; but he would scarcely have been a noted figure save for his plays and that quarrel with Goldoni and Chiari which preserves a paragraph for him in literary histories. Chiari is now forgotten; but he and Goldoni were actively writing in a new way — and Venice was flocking to the playhouse to applaud, so Gozzi felt, false sentiment and vulgar modernity. Daily life in the 1760's was bad enough—now one could actually see plays about beautiful innkeepers and merchant fathers with middle-class daughters indulging in middle-class love affairs. Goldoni was lovingly representing Venice, but it was not Gozzi's Venice. Gozzi wanted the enchanted city of palaces and doges, decked out in all the fancy of Byzantium and the Orient; Goldoni did not understand this exotic scene of masks and mysteries; Gozzi's Venice was a city for grand tragedy, or for the traditional comedy of art, masked and improvised—not for the representation of tradesmen and serving maids!

The theatrical feud between Gozzi and Goldoni was conducted in the usual eighteenth-century style of prologue, pasquinade, squib, lampoon, and extravagantly unsubtle satire. Venice flocked to see Goldoni's delightful comedies; did this not prove that such was what the public wanted? But Goldoni was trying to dispense with even the last lingering relics of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, was trying to devise comedies without that *sine qua non* of comedy, the brilliant improvised scenes performed by Italian Masks. Poets of the old school were challenged to do as well as he: could the Granelleschi, the conservatives in art, write a play to rival this new comedy of manners? Gozzi thought poorly of the public taste; there was nothing superior, he considered, about Goldoni's pieces; *he*, Gozzi, could pack a playhouse just as successfully, and do it with a nursery tale for children—so much for Goldoni and his serious innovations! The volatile Venetians wanted only to be startled and amused; above all, they wanted to be amused by their adored, their native Italian, Masks — by Truffaldino and Brighella and Smeraldina from Bergamo, by the stuttering Tartaglia from Naples, by the beloved Pantalone of Venice itself; they wanted their dialects, their buffooneries, their

topical quips, their pantomime; any fairy tale would do for the skeleton of a scenario on which one of the most talented companies of the day — Sacchi's troupe, just fled back from Lisbon where the earthquake had cut short their triumphs—might improvise a whole series of actions and sparkling dialogues.

From that happy mint of fairy tales, the *Pentamerone*, Gozzi took the absurd story of *L'amore delle tre melarancie* ("The Love of Three Oranges"). He added all sorts of bits of satire on the plays and poetic styles of Goldoni and Chiari (for example, melancholy and monotonous verses in the manner of these writers are used to kill one of the characters by deadly boredom) which the audience of that day, of course, fully appreciated. The poet tossed off three acts replete with marvels of stage machinery and astonishing devices—oranges that opened to reveal enchanted princesses, flowing fountains, tournaments, devils, processions, music, slapstick comedy, and all provided by those gifted masked mimes and character actors who represented for Gozzi the old, the true, the Venetian spirit of comedy.

This extravaganza was given in the San Samuel Theatre in January, 1761. It was an overwhelming success: he could not stop here! Gozzi had, apparently, meant only to answer his opponents' challenge and satirize their dramatic theory; he had not planned a great innovation, nor had he perhaps really intended to sit down at the age of forty and make himself a dramatist. But his *jeu d'esprit*, conceived however half-seriously, however half-contemptuously, so enchanted the city—and the actors—that he was importuned to write more in the same vein. Thus *L'amore delle tre melarancie* was the first of the ten fairy pieces on which Gozzi's fame rests. His complete theatre includes thirty-two plays. Twenty-two of these are ordinary enough; they are dramas or comedies, most of them modelled on Spanish originals by Calderón, Tirso de Molina, and others. They had a varying success, but today they rest in that limbo where only the literary historian likes to browse. The work which keeps Gozzi's name alive, the work which contributed to the continuing stream of fantasy, was that of the ten plays written in rapid succession between 1761

and 1765 — the *fiabe teatrali*, the fantasy plays. They were really a new genre. *L'amore delle tre melarancie*, although in time it might become an opera, was only a happy burlesque with fun, fantasy, and satire gaily intermingled; the costumes and stage effects were probably as much appreciated by the audience as the attack on Goldoni, which only the literary few would understand and enjoy. But Gozzi was too gifted a poet to continue in such a sterile campaign; he *would* continue to justify his claim that the Masks and their improvised comedy must be retained in the theatre; but he would do it now with art, not with buffoonery. One thing he did reflect upon—the audience adored the element of marvel, of wonder, of the supernatural. He considered that their tastes were coarser, their sensibilities more blunted than his; too few of them were aristocratic either in fact or in spirit; but they too, though already becoming corrupted by the spirit of the age, might be weary of the growing materialism of the rising middle class, of the chill rationalism which had begun to drift from more northerly lands, and might cling longingly to the old values of high honor, of pure love without false sentiment, of beauty unpolluted by the commonplace—in short, they too must long for an ideal, as opposed to a realistic world. How much of this did Gozzi meditate when he planned his charming plays? This, at least, must have been what he *felt*.

The nine remaining *fiabe* are in verse, save for the dialogue of the Masks (where it is written out), which is in prose. His favorites of the Commedia dell'Arte occur in all—stuttering Tartaglia, whom he seems to have created from a slight original; Pantalone, whom he loves as a faithful representative, humorous and kindhearted, of the true popular Venice; Brighella the Bergomask, whom he makes a character of his own; Truffaldino, another Bergomask (a character, that is, originally from Bergamo in northern Italy); and what we should call the comedienne, the lively Smeraldina. This core of comic players may turn up in Chinese dress, or may be cast as king's ministers or sausage makers in a mythical city, but they retain their names, their dialect, and their tricks. Nevertheless, these nine

plays are not really *Commedia dell'Arte* pieces; indeed, one or two are not what we should now call comedies at all save in the old technical sense of having a happy ending. They are stories of fantastic and intricate plot structure involving magic devices, the machinations of wicked enchanters, disguises and transformations, imprisoned princesses, and all the paraphernalia of the classic fairy tale or the *Thousand and One Nights*. The sources are generally Persian or Arabic, and here of course Gozzi is in the tradition of the Oriental tale and the taste for Oriental décor so widespread in his day. His settings are Eastern—sometimes particularized, as in *Turandot*, which takes place at the Manchu court in Peking, or in *Il mostro turchino* ("The Blue Monster"), which is at Nankin; sometimes in that same unlocalized region where Musset, Maeterlinck, Dunsany, and Firbank have placed fictions which they chose to be out of time and place, the better to engage our poetic attention without the distractions of the too near and too well-known. The tone of the plays varies from the high comedy of *L'augellin belverde* ("The Little Bird of Fair Green")—Gozzi calls it a "philosophical" *fiaba*, and it is perhaps his masterpiece—to the serious and psychological drama of *Turandot* (which he calls tragi-comic)—to the "tragedy" of *Zobeide*, which includes powerful elements of terror and horror. Two of these plays depart from the type in that they do not use the supernatural at all—*Turandot* and *I pitocchi fortunati* ("The Fortunate Beggars"), but they are sufficiently extravagant to deserve the name "*fiabe*".

Gozzi uses three types of characters: the Masks; the non-supernatural persons such as the hero and heroine, the old king, the falsely imprisoned queen, and so on; and the personages possessed of magic arts or such "characters" as jinns, hydras, speaking statues, and the like. The "straight" characters are of high degree, or, as for instance in the case of Pantalone's daughter in *Il re cervo* ("The Stag King") of surpassing virtue and beauty. The Masks may turn up in positions of rank, but this rise in the world merely adds to their absurdity, and they refer wistfully to their old homes in Bergamo or Venice, before they landed

(we don't quite know how) in the courts of Samarkand or Cathay.

Now these plays may be read merely for their delightful fancy and humor; their imaginative evocations charmed many of the romantic writers, particularly in Germany, where among others Hoffmann, Tieck, Schiller, and Goethe admired them extravagantly. Schiller translated *Turandot*; this and *L'amore delle tre melarancie* have been transmuted into well-known operas; *La donna serpente* ("The Serpent Woman") inspired one of Wagner's early pieces, *Die Feen*; there are echoes of *Il mostro turchino* in *The Magic Flute*. It is difficult to trace Gozzi's "influence," but there is no doubt that it played a part, if only indirectly through the German Romantic movement, in the future course of fantasy, dramatic and fictional.

Is there any deeper significance in the *fiabe* than their surface reflection of a lost epoch or their imaginative play of wonder and sentiment? One can scarcely assert that Gozzi wrote "hermetically," or that he gave profound analysis to the scenes that flowed so casually from his pen; nevertheless, for a few years he chose a certain genre which was quite his own creation, dealt lovingly with certain settings and characters and events, and then, as though he had said all there was to be said of this private world, turned from the land of faery and wrote like other people for the rest of his life. It is possible for a writer to apprehend and transmit poetic truths of which he is himself but dimly aware; it is a commonplace that Shakespeare affords a thousand truths which might astonish him, but which are none the less there, embedded in the rich layer upon layer of thought and feeling and expression. Gozzi was not a great artist, but he had a subtle mind, he was a man of wit (in the old sense), of great sensibility, a man whose intuitions of another meaning to the sensible world could go so far as to be almost mania (he began to fancy that the evil spirits of his own dramas were come to life and plagued him vengefully; this might be madness, but it is the madness of one who thinks in more than one dimension).

It may be suggested that in the *fiabe* the Masks represent, for Gozzi, the *real* world—the world of everyday experience in which we must live, however crude and materialistic it may be. These characters are not used simply as comic relief—in the way Elizabethan playwrights, for instance, sometimes introduce clownish action in a tragedy—nor as a mere chorus for picturesque effect; they are important in the development of the complicated plots, sometimes to be sure merely as minor but necessary adjuncts, but also as leading protagonists—for instance in *Il cervo*, where the Bergomask Brighella becomes more villainous than comic and turns his master into a stag, precipitating much of the action of the play.

The other non-marvellous characters, the heroes and heroines for example, represent the *ideal* world of chivalry, honor, love and devotion—the world of all those high virtues so poetically present in the epics and romances, in Ariosto and Tasso, in that absolute realm of ideal aristocracy to which Gozzi clung, although already the men were born who would chop down one tree for the guillotine and plant another in the name of plebeian liberty. These characters, however unrealistic in their perfection, are not completely stylized; there is tender feeling in the brotherly love of Jennaro in *Il corvo* ("The Crow"); there is warmth in the devotion between brother and sister in *L'augellin belverde*—it is indeed her love for her brother that cures Barbarina of the corroding philosophy of self-interest which she had derived from the doctrines of French *philosophes*, doctrines which Gozzi abhorred; amid all its Arabian Nights marvels, the love of Taer and Dardané glows with purity and sweetness in the tale of *Il mostro turchino*; the character of Zobeide, in the play of her name, has been justly praised for its lofty conception of womanly love and fidelity. Gozzi, in fact, always draws his women with sensitivity and warmth. Such beings, of course, can rarely be found in everyday Venice; although surrounded by ordinary persons—by the Masks—they are rendered more believable by their habitation in far lands where, we may for the illusion of five acts suppose, such pure ideals are still to be found.

There is a third set of characters in the *fiabe*, a third element in the narrative, in the whole poetic conception; these are the enchanters, the jinns, the sorceresses, the creatures who possess more than mortal powers; they are allied with forces of mystery of which we know only the effects, not the capricious and inscrutable causes; they represent that element of the *grotesque* which in itself is one of the strangest and most tenacious phases of art, existent before Gozzi, existent today, most easily detected perhaps in painting and sculpture—there are hints in his Venetian contemporary Longhi—but leaving its lamia trace, bright or very faint, through the Gothic, through the German romantics, through the schools of horror, through Poe and Dickens and Dostoevsky, Maeterlinck and Rimbaud, Hardy and Kafka. The enchanters who lay portentous tasks upon a chance-met prince in order to free themselves from still more mysterious dooms reflect that element of the perverse, the bizarre, which pervades a world where we find ourselves beset by the whim of fate, condemned without a cause, snared into complexities which we are too simple to understand yet which must be unravelled or we perish. The classic transformations of fairy tales have, no doubt, more than one psychological meaning in the racial inheritance of myth and archetype; but among other things we still can often feel that we are living lives not ours, that our spirits are forced into strange bodies compact of fear and pain, given names not rightly ours. These ancient racial tales, so full of symbol, remind us of man's terrible inability to communicate with his fellows: the king (in *Il re cervo*) longs for the love of his wife, but he is metamorphosed into a wretched old man; Taer's heart breaks at the sight of his beloved (in *Il mostro turchino*), but she sees only a repulsive monster. In the grotesque vision of life we are required to do the impossible, or are punished for sins we do not understand; the universe is a place of complete absurdity; the goddess Reason, as some enthusiasts suppose, does *not* reign; water may sing and graven images speak, a parakeet may be a wizard in disguise, a serpent be a fairy princess who longs for mortal love and life; a thoughtless word, a moment of forgetfulness, may destroy any fan-

cied order in life, and the lightest coincidence—as a greater writer, Hardy, so well understood—appear to bring ruin and disaster, not because such careless acts of chance are in *themselves* causes of tragedy, but because they may be used as instruments to bring about dire events necessitated by far other, far more mysterious and incalculable forces.

This quality of strangeness in Gozzi is more than a mere penchant for the marvels of the Oriental story or the European folk tale. He was not, as the romantics probably regarded him, a mere defender of fantasy in an age of reason, nor one who wished simply to preserve the play of fancy, the spirit of harlequinade and comic opera illusions; the fairy tale element is always treated seriously—never with irony or condescension. One might wonder, in fact, how so dark-spirited a man could have written so many comic fantasies if they were, indeed, no more than comic and fantastic. Two of these plays contain no magic at all. *I pitocchi fortunati* is based on the old story of the caliph who disguises himself that he may go about his realm and see the condition of his people for himself; here the strangeness is that of the fortuitous accidents by which men in high estate are hurled to the abyss of misery and poverty—it is the old theme of Fortune's wheel, alike out of the Middle Ages and Baghdad. In *Turandot* (named for the cruel princess who is the leading character) the strangeness has a touch of sinister. In short, even in these two plays there is a brooding shadow upon the extraordinary action, different in quality from the mere pathos of untoward events. This tinge of the sinister becomes a dark glare over the whole drama of *Zobeide*, which Gozzi himself called a tragedy because of its pity and horror; and the scene where the innocent but hideously transfigured wives of the wizard-king appear in the dungeon, is a masterpiece of the macabre.

Only the symbols of magic can free us from the inscrutable dooms and frightful ordeals which strike upon us from the grotesque world in which we are at such disadvantage with powers outside ourselves—we would say today with the forces of Nature; the makers of myth and folk tale would say with greater than mortal forces. Gozzi does

use the conventional apparatus of magic swords and incantations, but more importantly it is an inner quality of love and devotion, raised to almost mystic exaltation, which conquers the dark magic of the perverse, the bizarre, the sinister. This spiritual quality gives sweetness and delicacy to his love stories, and allows identification with his characters and scenes which, if they were all marvel and extravagance, would be only frigid and decorative.

It is this element of the grotesque and the sinister that gives depth and importance to a handful of plays otherwise valuable chiefly for their period interest and the influence of their genre.

Gozzi was forty-five when he finished his last *fiaba*, *Zeim, re dei geni* ("Zeim, King of the Genii"). Perhaps he felt the weariness of dwelling in an ideal world of fancy when the real world that he believed in was sinking into decadence. By the time he came to die, in 1806, he must have felt that all the old brightness was fled: soon the last mask would be gone, alike from the stage and from the carnival; gondolas would be blackened, the waters would no longer be wedded to the golden city; the reflection in the lagoons would merge with a decaying world above, and both alike seem old, outworn, unreal. Dead Venice of the past would be soon no more fantastic than the *pays lointain* of the *fiabe*. Gozzi's fairy plays are an epitome of an idea of fantasy, of an idea pervasive in the period; they transcend that period in so far as that idea is, in itself, inextricably mingled in the literature and culture of succeeding places and times.

Autobiography In Time of War

by

ELIO VITTORINI

[Elio Vittorini became well known in the American literary world through the translation of his *Conversazione in Sicilia*, which was published under the title *In Sicily* by New Directions in 1949, with a presentation by Ernest Hemingway. The book had been written and published in Italy shortly before the War. There followed, in 1951, the translation of *Il Sempione strizza l'occhio al Frejus*, also published by New Directions, under the title *The Twilight of the Elephant*. The first work had a front page review in the *New York Times Book Review* and was a Book Find Club selection. The welcome granted Vittorini in this country seemed natural to observers of the U.S.-Italy literary exchange, on account of Vittorini's own deep interest in American literature and his long and fruitful labors as translator and introducer of American authors in Italy. This work does not date only from the postwar "renaissance," but from much further back; his translations, for instance, of Faulkner's *Light in August*, of Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*, or of Caldwell's *God's Little Acre* were all done before the War; also the Saroyan vogue in Italy, for which Vittorini was largely responsible, probably had its peak during that period. Thus Vittorini, and other Italian intellectuals, may well be credited with having contributed to creating the premise for that resumption and deepening of intellectual exchange between the United States and Italy which took place in the easier and more euphoric postwar atmosphere.

Vittorini's influence in Italy among younger writers has been considerable; he exercises it not only by his example but also in his capacity as editor and publishers' counsellor. The Einaudi collection of fictional "finds," *Gettoni* ("chips"), is his own creature. For all these reasons, the recent announcement of Vittorini's *Diario in pubblico* ("Diary in Public") to be published by Bompiani, aroused great interest and expectation. It is a collection of re-edited writings, ranging from the purely essay-like to the fictional and allegorical, dating as far back as the late twenties, when Vittorini's literary career started, and covering that whole career through "documents" of different periods corroborated by new "footnotes."

Vittorini has granted the Editors of the *Italian Quarterly* permission to choose sections of the book from the galley-proofs, for translation into English. The following pages seemed perhaps to illustrate Vittorini's art at its most typical.]

The Desert

"In the middle of the city was the desert."

We were playing cards, talking. Four men; we were smoking, and in our hands we held aces, kings, jacks; knights too.

"Did you say *in* the city? Right in the middle?"

"That's what I said: there was city to the north, city to the west, to the east, and also to the south. From the squares and from the streets the winds blew."

"And it was desert?"

"Desert. It was rock and dust, with a clump of wormwood here and there; just so; and no water; and crows."

"And lizards?"

"And lizards."

"And no lights at night?"

"No, stars."

We looked at each other. A card was thrown on the table. Another was thrown, another, and another. The Neapolitan won.

"Well, was it very big?"

"No one knew. There were the bones of animals scattered about. Skulls with horns.

"A real desert."

"I've seen even the ruins of houses there."

"Human houses?"

"Human houses. Rooms."

"And how did you get there?"

"In a taxi. I took my luggage with me."

"And it was the desert?"

The Croatian set his cards down and raised his hands, and with his hands gripped his forehead. The rest of us kept our cards up, throwing nothing down. The queen of spades lay on the table.

"I can see it," said the Croatian. "The ruins and the tree stumps, and the tracks, and the ties, and the burnt skeletons of the trains."

We threw down our cards.

"Are you talking about another desert?"

"No, it's the same one."

"The earth has only one heart."

The Neapolitan spat and took the trick. He shook his head.

"We have one too where I come from," he said. "It has a rough wall around it, and not a blade of grass grows there, and people who pass by it cross themselves, and they call it the desert. It's among olive groves."

We lit up cigarettes again.

"I can see it," said the Croatian. "It's just like now, and it's the desert."

There was one who wasn't playing, the Spaniard, and he hadn't said a word: he was chewing tobacco, drawing it out in strands.

"The desert is deep."

What did he mean by that? We turned toward him and waited.

"It covers me," he went on. "I'm sitting here. I'm chewing tobacco. And I'll never be able to escape it!"

"Come now," said the Neapolitan.

He laughed; he alone; and heard only himself. The other stood up.

"Oh, the lovely desert of long ago!" he said.

And the others after him:

"The glittering sand."

"The enormous sun!"

"The days on the road, the long days!"

"The names of places to reach!"

"Oh, the lovely desert!"

(*Il Tesoretto Mondadori*, 1940-41)

Cities of the World

We loaded rocks and sand all day long, then we sat resting for a bit; it was night.

"Hum!" we said.

Lights were being lit on the mountain side; on the ocean too; we looked at each other, and higher up girls were passing by, and we kept saying "Hum!"

At one point the tall man said: "Alicante!" We spoke at last. "Alicante?"

"Sidney! Alicante!"

"Sidney too?"

"Cities of the world!"

Two girls passed by. They stopped.

"What?" one said to the other.

We pointed toward the lights.

"The city."

"Cities of the world."

They laughed, but stayed on. And the tall man said: "Manila, girls!"

They were caught. We pointed out to them the lights among the leaves; and the lights and leaves on the water; the night. "Cities of the world."

"And San Francisco!" cried the tall man.

We all began to shout.

"And Leghorn!"

"And Acapulco!"

And a little fellow: "Arquata Scrivia."

He was trembling, young in years, and was asked where he meant.

"I was there," said the little fellow. "It was in Persia."

Dead boats went by below us. "I was in Babylonia," said the oldest.

"In Babylonia?"

"In Babylonia. In Babylonia."

"That," observed the tall man, "was an ancient city."

"And am I not ancient enough? I was there in my youth," said the old man.

"But," said the tall man, "it's now lost."

"Everything is lost," answered the old man.

"It's underneath the sand," said the tall man. "It's been dead for centuries."

"Oh yes," answered the old man. "And it was beautiful!" He sighed. "It had such lights!"

(*Tempo*, no. 86. 1941)



Questions Across the Atlantic

Every winter, one night unexpectedly comes blacker than the rest; colder too; and I find I can't fall asleep. Then, as we lie in bed, the snow falls. The next day this is what we find: white rubble between the houses. But in the night it's a white beast that walks abroad, and a man can't sleep: he props himself up on a pillow, folds his arms, and smokes.

There's nothing else to do. The light near-by is no longer strong enough for reading a book. I'm shut up in the room with all of this, I smoke, and along the street the white beast hugs the walls.

"You," it calls. "You. Yououou."

The man smoking is taken by surprise, in his room. Why does it call? What does it want? He imagines his car stopped in a square. The snow is falling. And who can it be there at the wheel? And it continues to call: "You. Youou."

The place where I live is a poor man's hotel here in Milan. Nearby there are fields, buildings; the waste lands of the suburbs. They are occupied by Sicilians, Chinese, here and there a mechanic. Their worldly possessions are all that I have: a bed, a table; and now they hear the howling.

Someone knocks at my door. "Are you asleep?"

It's the older of two women who live in front of me: mother and daughter.

"Come in," I say. "Come on in."

But the woman doesn't come in. She says: "A horn is blowing."

"I know," I say. "I've heard it."

And she: "It's been blowing for some time."

And I: "Yes. For some time now."

Again it calls.

"Is it an automobile?" says the woman. She opens the door and stands on the threshold. "I think it's been blowing for two hours."

Meanwhile I had got out of bed. I put my overcoat over my shoulders. "It's impossible to sleep," I say.

"Impossible," she says. And the daughter crosses the landing. "Have you any cigarettes?" she asks me. "I've smoked all mine."

The beast had made us all get up. We think about the snow; it is surely snowing, and tomorrow we'll see over the city its white devastation. But snow comes at other times, and this isn't the same thing. This is nothing other than a beast that takes away sleep and rest. Good heavens, it passed under the window; I could hear its four paws! And this cry we say comes from an automobile carries nothing of its fierce mouth?

Years ago I wondered what sort of beast it was. The affronted world? The world's sorrow? I wrote about it in a letter to my Armenian friend Saroyan. "Dear Saroyan," I wrote. "We can hear a white beast, etc., etc. Do you hear it where you are?"

"I'll say we hear it!" he replied.

"Really?" I wrote. "You say you really hear it?"

"Why, yes," he replied. "It's not for nothing they invented the song about the big bad wolf. Do you know it?"

I knew it. Men at that time were innocent little pigs,

they wanted to be happy, they didn't want to be afraid, and they crowded into movie theaters, hundreds of thousands of little pigs.

"Who's afraid
Of the big bad wolf,
The big bad wolf,
The big bad wolf?"

This was the song. And who could be afraid any more? But the beast I meant was not a wolf. "Dear Saroyan," I wrote again. "It's not a wolf I'm talking about."

"No?" wrote Saroyan. "It's not the world wolf?"

"No," I wrote him. "It's not a matter of being afraid of it or not."

Then, by way of reply Saroyan sent me his story entitled "The Tiger." It was a fine story; I called it "The White Brute." But the beast in it was not my beast. It leapt up at every error man made; and at every wretchedness, every sorrow; it leapt up and laughed. It was our enemy. And on the other hand the beast I am talking about is perhaps not our enemy. What does it do? It comes one night, after a thousand we've slept through, and deprives us, for one night, of sleep. What else does it do? It doesn't laugh at us. It doesn't torment us. It doesn't frighten us. It doesn't want to devour us at all. It only touches, from the outside, our houses; and it deprives us, for one night, of serenity. And yet, in what it does, it's cruel!

(*Tempo*, no. 197, 1943)



Here, apropos of my boyhood, I might add some notes, true and personal, which compose part of a piece of mine that appeared in PESCI ROSSI, publisher's bulletin of Bompiani, no. 3, 1949.

Syracuse is a city of sailors and peasants, built on an island connected by a long bridge with Sicily. I was born there the 23rd of July, 1908 in a house from which, at the age of seven, I saw a ship loaded with Chinese founder and

sink. There were fortifications down below on the shoals behind the house, and on one side, a hundred yards beyond, lay the square where the peasants of the neighborhood, when they came back from the fields in the evening, would leave their carts with the shafts sticking up in the air. They brought their animals into the house, whether asses, mules or horses, always returning in the evening between seven and nine only to set out again at three in the morning. Inside every house there was a little courtyard with a pen for the animals and a stone basin for washing clothes. The men who returned in the evening with their animals to our house, and the women who did their washing in the stone basin in our courtyard, were relatives of mine on my mother's side: uncles on my mother's side, cousins on my mother's side. As for relatives on my father's side, I only heard them talked about: they were sailors. But my father worked on the railroad and we lived in the house in Syracuse, with my mother's family, only when he took his vacation. The rest of the time we lived at small stations along the railroad with metal screens on the windows and waste land around us.

It was always a waste land of malaria and of untilled estates; in some places with a sheep farm close by, in other places with a sulphur mine in the neighborhood. At one of these stations, under a clump of canes, I read the first book that made a deep impression on me. It was a children's version of *Robinson Crusoe* which bore on the cover a drawing of Robinson Crusoe bending over to examine on the sand of the desert island the footprints of *another* man. The *Thousand and One Nights*, which also made a deep impression on me, began a year later.

There were four boys in our family, and to go to school we took the train every day to the nearest city. But I had a minimum of schooling: five years elementary, then three years technical. My father wanted to make me an accountant. So I also attended a couple of classes in the institute that gives diplomas in double-entry bookkeeping, but I didn't succeed in winning the diploma; I repeated the first class twice, twice the second class; they were studies that didn't suit me, and at 17 I gave them up once and for all.

I say once and for all, since I had been trying to give them up for thirteen years. A government railroad worker gets free tickets for himself and for his family, and one day I had slipped out of the house with a ticket good on the whole Italian railroad network and with fifty lire in my pocket. In the daytime I explored the cities, at night (so as not to pay for a hotel room) I traveled. There were three escapes in four years, and I couldn't say for certain whether I set out every time not to return. I of course left a note for my father to the effect that I would not return, and of course I ended up always by returning. I would set out to see the world, just as much as I could of the people in the world, in the same way as I read to know about the world. But a fourth time I did not return.



Being a Writer — Summer 1944

I think there is great humility in being a writer.

I see it as it was in my father, who was a farrier and wrote tragedies, and did not consider writing tragedies any better than shoeing horses. In fact, when he was shoeing horses he never allowed anyone to say: "Not that way; this way. You did it wrong." He looked with his blue eyes, and smiled or laughed; he shook his head. But when he wrote he took everybody's suggestion no matter what it was.

He listened to what anyone told him, and he didn't shake his head, he agreed. He was very humble in his writing; he said he took it from everybody; and out of his love of writing he tried to be humble in everything: to take from others in all things.

My grandmother laughed at what he wrote.

"What foolishness!" she would say.

And my mother the same. She laughed at him because of what he wrote.

Only my brothers and I did not laugh. I saw how he would redden; how he humbly bowed his head; and that way I learned. Once, for the sake of learning, I slipped out of the house with him.

Every now and then my father would do that: he would slip away from home to write in solitude. Once I followed him: we walked for eight days among the fields of capers, amid the white flowers of solitude, and would stop under a rock for a bit of shade, he with his blue eyes would write and I would learn, and when we returned my mother gave me a drubbing for the two of us.

My father, then, asked me to forgive him for the blows received on his account.

I remember how it was. I didn't reply.

Could I tell him that I forgave him?

And he said to me in a frightening voice: "Answer! Do you forgive me?" He seemed like the ghost of Hamlet's father desiring vengeance. It wasn't that he wanted forgiveness.

But that was the way I learned what writing is.

(First edition of *Uomini e no*:
pp. 165-6; left out of later editions)



Milan Like Madrid

In August of 1943 Milan too had its blitz, just like Warsaw, and Rotterdam, Belgrade, like the cities of Spain and of China, like London. There were anti-fascists in Milan. And a part of them were in prison. Many anti-fascists were revealed as such at the time of Badoglio's coup d'état, and Badoglio's generals had arrested them. Other anti-fascists, imprisoned for years in Piedmont and Emilia, had been brought to Milan for retrial and were in the jails of Milan. New jails at that time had been improvised in Milan; even the Arena had become a prison, the whole second floor of the Palace of Justice was a prison, and the anti-fascists who were shut up there, without a bench to sit on, without a cover to stretch out on at night, had the same emotions and thoughts regarding war as the workers of London. The August '43 blitz came down upon them, and there were not even shelters for them: the police and the prison guards took cover, leaving them under lock and key, in cells or in cages, in im-

provided prison rooms, in courtyards. What was the reaction of those anti-fascists to the Allied blitz on Milan? Written around Christmas time 1944, these pages which were meant to bear witness of it were published in POLITECNICO a year later.

The city gave us heat from itself, for it was burning, and it gave us its dust, its ashes; but it gave us nothing of its former animation, no noises from the crowd, the trolleys, the automobiles, the iron curtains drawn up or down, nothing of its morning and its afternoon, nothing of its evening; and all this, I must say, was just as we would have it, there inside, to be able to think of Porta Venezia with its plane-trees on fire, and all the cafes, all the stores, all the hotels and movie theaters closed, the columns of trolleys stopped and their poles struck down, no longer anyone to sell books under an umbrella, no longer anyone to guard bicycles, no longer anyone to come up the stairs from the subterranean comfort station, and no flower girl to offer gardenias, no more counters with sliced cucumbers, no more newspaper stands and Spanish or Chinese names, not even the memory of dance-hall orchestras, but only the red expanse of asphalt amid the conflagration, in summer time, and little prostitutes that come and go saying, no longer in anger, only in lament, "O Christ, aren't there any men left? Aren't there any more men? Nobody's a man any more?"

Mountains came down on Milan, passed over, and opened up, broke on Milan, and the earth exploded, earth rose up from the courtyards, earth fell back again.

"It's coming," someone said. "Look, it's coming."

Explosions came closer, three hundred yards away, two hundred, a hundred and fifty, a hundred, and the fifth must have been right on top of us, we were on the road, and yet it was beyond us, in a courtyard, from which the rocking impact shook the reinforced concrete of the whole building.

"It's gone," we said. But we would also say together: "Again." And again there would be thunderbolts over the earth following one upon the other, again explosions, a first, a second, a third, each explosion nearer, and one more that should have been right in our midst but was still be-

yond us, with a shudder and a tremble and an upheaval of earth.

The raid of August 15th was neither the severest nor the longest; the longest had taken place the 12th, Thursday, and the severest the night before, Saturday the 14th; but it was the gloomiest. It seemed as if it wanted to snuff out, to cover up; it poured out darkness: earth and thunder, and every one of its blows was a pit filled on fire from the houses. Nothing rocked any longer in our reinforced concrete; it only got darker and darker; and earth got in our ears at every thunderbolt, there was more and more earth and less and less thunder, from the center of a circle that kept widening, leaving in the city a muted rumble.

One of us said that he hated "them." Who? The enemies of our enemies?

"They *are* our enemies," Gubbio wailed.

"They're Americans," said another. "Are our enemies the Americans?"

"They're the fascists," Gubbio wailed. Was it the fascists who were destroying Milan?

"Let's understand each other," said Molina.

"We do understand each other," said Gubbio. "I said it's the fascists. It's the fascists. It's the nazis."

"But are there any in Milan?" said another.

"Let's understand each other," said Molina. "We're not in Milan."

We weren't in Milan? Molina said that we weren't in Milan. Then where were we?

"In Madrid," said Bolaffio.

In Spain, in Madrid? "Yes, and in Guernica."

In Spain, in Guernica? "In Spain," said Bolaffio.

"And in Santander. In San Sebastian."

Well then, we were Spaniards.

"We're Chinese too," said Manuel.

And were we in China, not Milan?

"Shanghai," said Manuel.

In China, in Shanghai? Not Milan?

"In Poland too," said another.

And what were we doing in all these places instead of Milan?

"We're there under the bombs," said Bolaffio.

Under fascist bombs in all those places?

The day after the fourth raid prisoners in the Palace of Justice were taken outside Milan to the prisons of Seregno. Trucks with policemen and soldiers picked them up and transported them, through Milan in flames, to their new residence. They saw then, in our people as well, how the people had been in Spain, how they had been in China.

The truck turned, then turned again: we were standing on top among policemen and soldiers seated on the edge, and at every turn the whole mass would lurch, bending to one side or the other.

"But where are we now?"

"On the corso Porta Vittoria. Don't you see?"

"Here on Porta Vittoria?"

"Don't you see there the union building?"

"That's the union building?"

"You can tell from the church next door."

"That's the church that was next to it?"

Two sheets of water had spread apart and they rose up from the earth; spurts hit our faces.

"Is it the firemen?"

"What do you mean, the firemen?"

"I mean do these spurts come from firemen's pumps?"

"The conduits are broken here. It's all flooded."

The water came halfway up the wheels of the truck, and one wheel sank deeper.

"Stop, stop," they shouted.

"There are potholes under the water."

"There's one as big as the truck."

The truck recoiled in the water, all the men standing up on top were thrown backward, and the truck swerved,

recoiled again, again swerved, turned, and every time the men on top were thrown backwards or forwards.

"But where did the other trucks go?"

"They probably went along the canal too."

"There's not one in front of us."

Someone stood up on tiptoe, looked over the roof of the cab. "There are some," he said. "There are some."

And he tried to count; he counted one, two, three; farther on he saw a fourth that may have hidden a fifth that in turn may have hidden a sixth, and he could imagine a long line that kept turning from one street into another.

"We're on the canals," said a soldier.

That we couldn't see. We saw the wide gutted road, iron poles broken to pieces, twisted poles, bent poles, black wires that hung from pole to pole, and great masses of stone on the road. "Big bombs," said the soldier.

"Two hundred pounds?"

"More than that."

"Four hundred?"

"More than four hundred."

"Certainly not two thousand."

"Why not two thousand?"

The truck had stopped, it recoiled and lurched, recoiled and lurched, with the men who were knocked right or left, forward or backward, all together.

"Why don't you look out and see what's happening?"

There was an avalanche of boulders strewn across the road. We skirted round a black hole in the asphalt: the canal underneath was exposed; and we entered a narrow street traversed by tracks, toward heat, toward smoke, toward the smell of burning.

"This almost seems like via Monforte."

"And isn't it via Monforte? Of course it's via Monforte."

"Have we already passed Largo Augusto then?"

"Why, for a while we were even on corso Venezia!"

"We passed it some time ago."

We had now left via Monforte and entered San Babila: this wasn't hard to recognize; and we skirted the red rubble of crumbling brick, through red dust, outside the portals of the gutted church; we entered into a denser heat, a darker air, a heavier crackling rumble.

"Is it here that it's burning?"

"It was burning here yesterday morning. Now it's burning in back."

"Is this corso Vittorio?"

"We're in corso Vittorio."

"Then it's the Duomo that's burning."

"The Duomo? It's not the Duomo!"

"It's over there. It's via Torino."

"It's all via Torino."

A yellow cloud hung low and hot at the third storey of the houses on the broad square in which corso Venezia and corso Vittorio Emanuele meet; and the truck passed under the cloud between the skyscraper and the Palazzo del Toro. There was a tunnel under the yellow cloud, and it was the same as Madrid where the skyscrapers are, going toward Boadilla one day when there was a bombardment from the hills (Bolaffio could recall), in August of '36, in March of '37, rows of trolleys full of armed workers, an armed crowd on the two sidewalks, a line of trucks and the songs of the International Brigades. Or it was the same as Nanking in China (Manuel could recall that), just away from the port, on the river, the day the Japanese fascists landed at the port and a thousand junks burned on the river, ten thousand houses burned along the river, and a hundred thousand Chinese burned even in the river waters under the iron and the fire of six hundred airplanes.

"What is this crowd?" someone asked.

Now you could see the large crowd, under the low cloud between the houses, all moving in a single direction, as if it were the large crowd that had been in Madrid, in Spain, dense, black, shouldering arms and shouting "no pasarán" all together, from the Puerta del Sol to the Ciudad Universitaria. Or as if it were the larger crowd that had been in all those places in China, carrying mattresses on their heads,

pushing carts, pulling wagons, with babies tied behind their backs, pots hung on their necks, cages in hand, and bare feet, bare feet, the trampling of a million bare feet which the Japanese, hidden in the canebrakes, were waiting to hear on the muddy bank of the river, to give the signal to machine guns set all along twenty kilometers of canebrake and river.

It was this way every day at that hour.

"But where are they going?"

Where there aren't any bombs at night. "How should I know where? To the fields. To the haylofts."

"As far as possible from Milan."

"To the countryside nearby?"

"A little to the countryside nearby and a little beyond."

"A little this way too."

Pushing carts, pulling wagons, many on bicycles, but most on foot, with mattresses on their heads, bundles on their heads, bundles under their arms, cages in hand, pots and pans hung on a stick: that was the hour they set out, and the farther they went the better it was. Until the sirens stopped blowing in the night of the earth, and until the airplanes stopped droning in the night of the sky, they did not halt; they kept on going until that moment, and then they turned to look at Milan and their houses, fifteen kilometers, twenty kilometers, thirty kilometers in back of them, which were burning.

"And they go every day?"

"They go every day and every day they return."

They stopped when the big booming came, they looked at Milan burning, and at once took to the road again to return; they went back more hurriedly than they had come.

They returned to get a closer look at their houses that were burning, to try to put out the fire inside their houses, to search in the rubble of their houses, and collect, carry away, a bucket, a hammer, a cradle, an iron, a plug, a cook-stove, whatever they might find still among the rubble of their houses.

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Translated by Lowry Nelson, Jr.

Postwar Italy:

A Study in Economic Contrasts

by

GEORGE H. HILDEBRAND

[The economy of postwar Italy, so essential to the cause of freedom in Western Europe, has attracted a great deal of attention. No one, perhaps, has dealt with it with such understanding and insight as George H. Hildebrand, Professor of Economics and Director of the Institute of Industrial Relations at the University of California in Los Angeles.

A specialist in the labor field, and particularly concerned with the problem of unemployment, Professor Hildebrand has treated this question in relation to Italy in three previous articles (*Applicabilità del pensiero di Keynes al problema della disoccupazione*; Studi Economici, 1953. *The Post-War Italian Economy: Achievements, Problems, Prospects*; World Politics, 1955. *The Italian Parliamentary Survey of Unemployment*; American Economic Review, 1955.)

In this essay he considers the whole question of economic problems in Italy today, and the possibility of a solution. The recipient of Fulbright and Guggenheim awards in the academic year 1952-53, Professor Hildebrand had the opportunity to study the question on the scene. In January 1958 he will return to Italy, having been awarded the rare honor of a second Guggenheim Fellowship. While in Italy Professor Hildebrand will put the finishing touches on a work, now in manuscript form, entitled *Stagnation and Progress: The Paradox of Italian Economic Recovery, 1945-1956.*]

According to a recent dispatch to the New York Times (August 4, 1957), unemployment in Italy during January-April, 1957, showed the first major drop since the end of World War II. During early 1957 the unemployed averaged 1.9 million, down 200,000 from the same period in 1956. By comparison, unemployment averaged about two

million persons during the early postwar years, while between 1950 and 1956 it slowly crept up to a level of almost 2.2 million. Even with the encouraging drop in the number of unemployed in 1957, almost ten per cent of the labor force remains out of work. By contrast, there were only 2.6 million unemployed in the United States in August, 1957, or 3.8 per cent of a labor force slightly more than three times larger than the Italian.

Although the burden of unemployment continues to be very severe, Italy is not in the throes of an orthodox economic depression. Far from it. Despite the loss of perhaps one-third of her national wealth in World War II, she had fully recovered her prewar economic capacity by 1949. Even more impressive, she has attained one of the highest rates of expansion in output in the postwar world. Since 1947 the production of goods and services has been growing steadily by at least seven per cent a year. In 1956 national income rose seven per cent over 1955, at steady prices. Although the level of national income is low, amounting to roughly only \$20 billion in 1956, or one-seventeenth of the American total, the postwar Italian rate of increase has been twice that of the United States.

Thus the Italian economic scene presents a sharp and puzzling contrast: rapid progress in output and lasting apparent prosperity, yet chronic and heavy unemployment. Indeed, Italy is a land of economic contrasts. Despite the large number of idle workers, the country is constantly under severe inflationary pressure. Although output and exports have grown rapidly, there is continuing difficulty in maintaining the balance of international payments. North Italy approaches the economic and technical standards of Northwest Europe, while the South conforms to the low levels of Greece and Spain. The real earnings of industrial workers are now 50 per cent better than 1938, yet abject poverty is widespread. Chronically severe unemployment suggests strong population pressure, but the natural rate of increase in population is well below that in the United States and much of Western Europe.

These sharply discordant economic facts are the central issues in Italian politics today, while their successful

resolution in the coming decade may well determine the survival of parliamentary government in that country. On the one side, they serve as a warning against the facile conclusion that Italy suffers from an old-fashioned depression of the Anglo-American type, for which increased spending of all kinds is the conventional and well-tested remedy. On the other, they point clearly to the basic problem of the Italian economy: how to achieve a major structural reorganization, to improve technology and productivity so that jobs can be created and destitution can be conquered within a framework of monetary stability and free institutions.

With this point of departure in mind, I shall now consider these questions in greater detail, closing with an evaluation of the future outlook.

Italy does not suffer from a conventional depression

The notion that Italian unemployment reflects a conventional depression arises from a quite natural tendency to reason from a few parallel facts, to the neglect of certain decisive differences. Depressions have always involved heavy unemployment, widespread poverty, and low per capita incomes. Italy suffers from them all and has so throughout the postwar period. However, here the parallel ends, as a few major facts will readily show.

The traditional depression centers in a collapse of effective demand for resources and products. It has its origin in a decline of private capital investment. Inability of the economy to absorb in productive investment all of the savings the community attempts to make out of its income brings about a fall of income, production, and employment. Recovery then depends upon a revival of spending (demand), traditionally by the expansion of private investment. When recovery actually occurs, the economy traverses the path of the familiar "business cycle." When it does not, the depression becomes chronic in form, as in the 'thirties. In either case, the immediate causes are a deficient rate of investment and an excessive rate of saving.

Now consider the Italian case. There is obviously no deficiency of investment opportunities. On the contrary,

the demand for savings has been extremely great for years, showing itself in interest rates as high as 12 per cent on business loans. Capital is very difficult to obtain. There is a plethora of capital-using projects, for the rationalization of industry, for the creation of new plant and equipment, for the expansion of output, and for a broad array of programs for government investment. Likewise, there is a strong and lasting demand for consumer goods, for the Italians now aspire to levels of living comparable with the richer nations. In essence, the aggregation of demands on the Italian economy are straining the capacity of the system.

This long-standing condition of strain is shown in several impressive ways. One of them is the high rate of interest already noted, for only at this level can be restricted supply of real savings be balanced with the intense demand for new capital. Another is the presence of continuous inflationary pressure, so acute that sagacious management of fiscal affairs and the money-creating mechanism has been mandatory ever since the end of World War II, to maintain some semblance of stability in the price and wage levels. In consequence the government has had to develop strict controls over the creation of credit by the banking system, in this connection taking great care to confine itself to the free capital market for the financing of its own deficits. In addition, considerable skill has been required for the management of Italy's international accounts, to check the growth of imports and to expand exports, to prevent enforced depreciation of the lira or, what is the same thing in less obvious guise, the adoption of a full panoply of controls over international trade and investment. Finally, the rapid growth of output since 1947 is not to be overlooked. Far from manifesting either a cyclical decline or chronic stagnation, production has been expanding at a phenomenal rate for a decade, one so high that the collateral existence of much inflationary pressure actually should occasion no surprise. If there were any tendencies to underinvestment and oversaving, this remarkable and well-sustained growth in output could not have been achieved.

Yet severe unemployment has persisted in Italy throughout this same decade, suggesting one of the obvious symptoms of conventional depression. If Italy does not suffer from a depression, how then is this seeming paradox to be explained?

The significant clue to a tenable solution of the problem lies in the hunger for investible savings, which shows itself in high interest rates, pressure for increased bank credit, and a strong tendency for imports to outstrip exports. Italy, in short, suffers from a chronically severe deficiency of productive capital. More specifically, the stock of capital is too small to provide full employment for the work force, for two principal reasons. First, the small amount of capital available per worker dictates a low level of labor productivity by international standards, one that necessarily would rapidly decline even further if additional workers were to be absorbed in productive employment. Second, while the level of real wages is absolutely low compared with the richer nations, it is on the average high relative to the productivity of Italian labor and has been rising markedly over the postwar years. Given the low level of labor productivity, the cost of employing additional workers is too high. Accordingly, there persists a substantial volume of unemployment. If unemployment is to be significantly reduced, either one of two developments must also occur: real and money wages would have to drop, which is politically impossible; or the productivity of labor must be substantially increased, which requires large quantities of additional capital that are difficult to obtain barring extensive recourse to foreign sources. Thus the Italian economy suffers from severe restraints, which provide little room for maneuver and which are difficult to comprehend when judged from the American background.

These harsh economic realities suggest, therefore, that Italy actually suffers from capital-shortage unemployment, and not from unemployment invoked by investment deficiency characteristic of the traditional Anglo-American kind of depression. Stated slightly differently, Italy endures certain difficulties of economic structure having their roots in a surplus of labor and an acute shortage of capital, and

connected in turn with a high ratio of wage costs to the price of capital. If mass unemployment is to be overcome, then either the quantity of capital and the productivity of labor must increase or the price of labor must fall. Since the latter alternative has no prospect of being taken, Italy must assume a massive task of capital formation, accelerating the development of her economy in a form and at a speed sufficient to create a large amount of additional productive jobs for her idle workers. At bottom this comes down to a problem of generating enough additional saving to foster the required rate of growth.

To avoid excessive oversimplification, it is necessary to examine the problems of chronic unemployment, capital shortage, high wage costs, and low productivity in somewhat greater detail.

Leading characteristics of the Italian economic problem

1. The population question. Although population pressure is a factor in the Italian unemployment problem, it is pressure of a quite subtle kind, quite distinct from that found in India and other Oriental countries. Birth and death rates have both been falling for more than half a century, and now compare well with Western standards, reflecting improved levels of income, sanitation, and medical care. However, in the South birth rates remain absolutely high, indicating the impoverished and backward condition of that region.

When we look at the labor force, we find another of those curious paradoxes in the Italian economy. On the one side, the total population rose 11.2 per cent between 1936 and 1951, while the population of working age soared by 17.8 per cent. On the other, the labor force itself increased only 5.9 per cent. Evidently the supply of labor markedly failed to keep pace with population. This naturally poses the question: where is the pressure on the labor market, if we are to appeal to population for an explanation of unemployment?

Fortunately, there is an explanation for these apparently contradictory facts. First, the disproportionate rise in the population of working age reflects the temporarily

high birth rates fostered by the fascist government after 1932, together with the marked decline of emigration in recent times. In turn, the high birth rate of the 'thirties has made itself felt in an exceptionally high number of annual young recruits to the labor force, many of whom have never found a first job. Emigration, Italy's traditional safety valve for pressure on the labor market, used to absorb permanently over a half-million Italians each year before World War I. After 1946 net emigration has been running at only about 150,000 persons yearly. In addition to these influences, the number of women of working age entering the labor force has been falling for decades with the rise of per capita income, also accentuating the gap between the population of working age and the effective labor supply.

Second, the much slower growth of labor supply directly reflects the inability of the economy to develop new jobs at a rate to keep up with potential candidates for work. The demand for labor, in other words, has failed to keep pace with the growth of the population of working age. Many persons in the latter group simply make no real effort to enter the labor force because the prospects for employment are so unpromising. Those who do usually end up as unemployed.

This explanation brings us back to our main thesis: that the capital stock of Italy is too small and increases too slowly to absorb all of the employable population in productive labor, given existing levels of wage costs and labor productivity. This leads in turn to a double result: massive unemployment on the one side and an unusually large inactive population on the other.

The contribution of high birth rates in the 'thirties to postwar unemployment has now about run its course, although another brief surge is expected in the early 'sixties, in response to the second upswing of the birth rates in the middle 'forties. Against this are two other forces that will continue to make the problem of creating adequate job opportunities acute. First, for many years employment in Italian agriculture has failed to increase. Perhaps over two million workers are already seriously underemployed in farming. For the future, there is no prospect of increas-

ing employment in this sector, while there is every reason to expect a marked decline in jobs as rationalization and mechanization proceed. Second, great efforts are being made to modernize industry as well, which also will displace many workers from jobs. Thus, even though natural increase of labor supply will decline in the longer run as the population factor turns favorable, pressure on the labor market will increase with the changing structure of agriculture and industry.

2. The demand for labor. We have considered unemployment from the standpoint of population and labor supply. It is now appropriate to look at demand.

Although Italy achieved a strong and well-sustained expansion of output beginning as early as 1947, strangely enough it has led to little absorption of the unemployed until quite recently. Even more puzzling, overtime work by already employed labor began to be significant as early as 1950, and since has become very substantial. As with the other paradoxes of the Italian economy, however, these too have their explanation.

Beginning in 1945, employers were restrained by law from releasing surplus workers, first to prevent enforced transport to Germany for work in war industry there, and later to provide a kind of compulsory subsistence at the expense of industry with the collapse of production in the disintegration immediately following the end of the war. Although this legislation was later repealed, the trade unions had by that time become strong enough to resist layoffs effectively, an advantage that they still enjoy. In consequence, for over a decade many employers have been dissuaded from hiring new hands as production increased, preferring instead to pay overtime rates to avoid adding extra workers who would have to be kept on the payroll despite any possible future decline in output.

Moreover, the peculiar nature of labor costs has worked against increased employment and in favor of more overtime work. A substantial portion (over 40 per cent) of the daily cost of employing a worker consists of fixed charges levied on the employer for numerous social security benefits. It has thus actually proved cheaper to pay overtime

penalty rates to the existing force than to assume the expense of adding new personnel. Here again, therefore, the demand for labor has been restricted, despite rising output.

The wage system itself has also checked the postwar growth in labor demand, accentuating the number of unemployed. The rapid rise of money wage costs, directly through collective bargaining and indirectly through legislation to increase social security charges, has crippled weak firms and industries, in some cases bringing about layoffs and even shutdowns. At the same time this pressure has encouraged employers generally to emphasize investments in new plant and equipment that are highly labor-saving, to hold down the rise in labor costs. This factor has exerted a subtle restraint upon the growth of employment relative to the rate of new investment and the expansion of output. Pressure for higher wages and increased social security benefits is, of course, natural in these times, and one can wholly sympathize with the desire of Italian workers for a better material standard of life. However, the difficulty centers in the consequences of this technique of betterment: it curtails opportunities for the unemployed and the underemployed to find jobs, shifting losses to these unfortunate groups in order to provide benefits for those already better situated.

Furthermore, the postwar period has witnessed a strong tendency towards leveling of the occupational wage structure, compressing the differential for highly skilled factory labor from 154 per cent of the unskilled common labor rate in 1938 to only 124 per cent by 1954. With inflation, trade unions and governments everywhere tend to stress flat money increases to all occupational groups, to keep parity with the rising cost of living. In Italy this has been effected through the cost-of-living bonus. Only during the past three years has this compression tendency been reversed, when both the unions and the employers finally came to recognize that it had gone too far.

The effects of compression have been wasteful use of employed labor and continued unemployment for many of the unskilled. The relative cheapness of skilled labor has encouraged employers to hoard it and to use it on menial

tasks. The relative dearth of unskilled labor has, in turn, discouraged its use on jobs where it is better suited. As of 1956 nearly one-third (614,000) of the registered unemployed consisted of youngsters below 21 years of age and in search of a first job. A major part of this group lacks any skills whatever, while the heavy cost to employers of training them as apprentices, together with the low additional earnings from skill, has barred them from the traditional apprenticeship system. Thus the Italian labor market has been burdened with a surfeit of unskilled and inexperienced youngsters, for whom there has been little demand for many years. This, too, has contributed to chronic unemployment.

By checking the rate of expansion of employment in the better paid sectors of the economy, the relatively high cost of industrial labor operates to bottle up much of the employed labor supply in low-paying, low-productivity jobs. This lowers average labor productivity generally, slowing the rise in living standards. On every side the visitor to Italy is struck by the redundancy of labor and the plethora of menial tasks. Both reflect the scarcity of capital and the retarding influence of relatively high labor costs upon the growth of employment in the high-wage sector of modern industry, where labor is much more productive.

The preponderance of low-wage, low-productivity jobs shows in three major ways: the dominance of small family enterprises in artisan trades, distribution, and services; the large number of small peasant holdings in agriculture; and a large amount of government employment consisting essentially of make-work jobs. The family enterprise is free of trade union control over wages and can also easily evade the heavy social security charges. Thus emerges a kind of subsidy that permits many highly inefficient firms to survive. In agriculture there has been a marked pulverization of holdings in many districts. Lack of urban job opportunities condemns many potentially valuable workers to remain on the family plot, where the returns barely provide a shockingly low level of subsistence. Low per capita earnings constrict the market for non-agricultural products, holding down the growth of the industrial and service sec-

tors of the economy. On the government side, overmanning of bureaus and departments is the natural political result of efforts to provide employment.

It can, of course, be argued that these "disguised" types of unemployment are economically justified if they yield value product in excess of the cost of maintaining the same excess labor in unemployment. However, the correct comparison is with the alternative productivity of labor if it could enter more remunerative trades. Retention of these workers in sectors of extremely low productivity merely means that the demand for labor is distorted in the wrong directions, particularly by the excessively high cost of factory labor. What are needed are increased saving and investment, to accelerate the growth of the more productive parts of the economy, including agriculture itself. In turn this would raise economic efficiency and productivity, yielding higher per capita incomes. To achieve this massive adjustment, a higher rate of capital formation is essential.

3. Regional imbalance. The theme of capital shortage, which manifests itself in so many patterns of Italian economic life, also dominates in the sharp contrasts between North and South. The bulk of manufacturing industry centers in Liguria, Piedmont, and Lombardy. There may be found many splendid plants, specializing in a broad variety of products—automobiles and trucks, locomotives, ships, chemicals, synthetic fibers, steel, machine tools, and engineering equipment. There, too, are located most of Italy's largest concerns, her main banking houses and capital market, and the majority of her highly paid workers. One can readily sense a vigorous spirit of enterprise in this region, rivaling that of West Germany. It has been aptly remarked that the streetcars in both Milan and Rome are provided with clocks, the only difference being that those in Milan actually show the correct time.

As one proceeds south of the Po Valley, a change of scene gradually become evident. The terrain itself becomes much more rugged and is dotted with dense clusters of small farms wherever cultivation is conceivably possible. Below Rome and Naples, the density of rural population becomes even more apparent. In the towns and villages

of the deep South the population is crowded into small areas. Mass poverty is readily evident in the dwellings, shops, and dress of the inhabitants. Although regions like Calabria, so well described in Norman Douglas' *Old Calabria* (1914), are incredibly rich in physical beauty, in history, and in their fascinating diversities of local culture, one also quickly senses that the struggle for life is hard and opportunities to rise are painfully constricted.

Whatever the statistic, stark poverty is its unequivocally indicated result throughout the Italian South. To illustrate, private net product per capita, which is a rough measure of income, in the South for 1951 was 42 per cent below the national level, while in Calabria, the poorest region, the gap was actually 48 per cent. In fact, income per capita in the South as a whole was 10 per cent less than in 1938, despite the outstanding progress of the nation itself. In 1953 the Parliamentary Commission on Poverty found that 37.7 per cent of all Calabrian families were in the poorest category of income levels, unable to buy wine, meat, or shoes. In the North and for the entire nation, the corresponding figures were only 1.5 and 11.8 per cent. Other data tell the same unhappy story: per capita consumption of meat and milk in 1951 was only 44 per cent of the Northern average; passenger motor vehicles per thousand inhabitants were only one-third of the Northern figure; local government expenditure per head was about one-half the Northern level; and illiteracy among youngsters ranged between 16 and 26 per cent in the Southern areas, as against only one per cent in Lombardy, Liguria, and Piedmont. Housekeeping rooms per hundred inhabitants were one-third below the Northern standard. Birth rates are double those in the North, while death rates are comparable, which signifies much greater population pressure in the South. And finally, the portion of the Southern population actually in the labor force is about 25 per cent below the Northern level, largely reflecting the restricted number of job opportunities available in this impoverished region.

The Southern economy is dominated by agriculture, which claimed more than half the labor force in 1951, while only 27.4 per cent were attached to industry and

transportation—again indicating the lag in economic development. For the North, the comparable figures were 37.3 and 39.2 per cent, showing the reverse side of the same medal. The labor supply in Southern agriculture consists mainly of farm laborers, peasants on their own pitifully small plots, and peasants attached to large estates usually held by absentee owners (the *latifundia*). Outside of farming, most of the working population ekes out an arduous living from tiny stores and artisan shops, from government housing, road and land reclamation projects, and in a few centers, like Naples and Palermo, from factory jobs.

It should not be inferred that dominance of agriculture is the cause of Southern poverty, for a farm economy need not lead to that result. It is well known among economists that nations such as Denmark and states such as Iowa and Kansas enjoy very high per capita levels of income, earned primarily from agriculture. However, the Italian South suffers from a major difference, and it is decisive: per capita productivity in farming there is extremely low, owing to the prevalence of too many small holdings, an inadequately developed surrounding economy, partially exhausted natural resources, and an unsatisfactory orientation of farm output to market demand. Southern Italian agriculture is saturated with people, technologically backward, and starved for capital. However, its continued dominance constitutes impressive evidence of the grave lack of alternative opportunities in industry and trade. The result is inevitable: a dense population blocked off in farming, forced to subsist at levels of existence typical of the lands of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Basin.

There are three main causes of the South Italian economic problem. First, the natural resources of the region are quite restricted in range and inherently poor in quality relative to Western standards. Much of the land is of low productivity, while the holdings are largely situated in hilly and mountainous areas, often quite difficult to reach. Generations of use have reduced the natural fertility of much of the soil. Over the centuries much of the original forest cover has been stripped off, creating a serious flood problem. At the same time, rainfall is scanty and irregular,

creating great need for water storage facilities and irrigation works. The geographical location of the South is also a serious handicap. It is far distant from existing markets for agricultural or industrial products, while its natural market with the peoples of the Mediterranean Basin is small because of poverty throughout these lands. Obviously much can be done, and is now being done, to rectify the correctable difficulties of the South, by means of new capital investment. However, the acute shortage of available new capital seriously cripples the nation's ability to achieve spectacular and prompt improvement.

Second, as population has steadily increased in this long unpromising environment, it has been dammed up in low-productivity farm work because available alternatives are so few. The very low income level has greatly constricted the local demand for industrial products and services, which in turn has necessarily stunted the growth of a complementary industrial and trading economy in the region. The vicious circle of poverty and low productivity is reinforced further by the small quantity of saving yielded from the low volume of regional income. Moreover, the problem is further complicated by the lack of a substantial entrepreneurial class: business opportunities draw many of the gifted Southerners to the North, and the level of professional education in the South is quite low. Yet if economic stagnation is to be overcome, a talented stratum must be developed and retained.

Third, South Italy until very recently has also been a victim of certain national policies in force ever since Unification in 1871. Unification itself replaced the early protectionism afforded the Southern economy under the Bourbon monarchy, opening up a common national market in which the South found itself unable to compete. In consequence many of its non-agricultural industries largely withered away, with little left to its growing population except a dreary and impoverished agricultural life. Then at the end of the 19th century Italy reverted to protection, this time for the benefit of the North. This policy, which is still in effect, increases the prices of farm equipment, cereals, fertilizer, and manufactures, adding to the cost

handicaps of Southern agriculture while reducing the already low incomes of the people there generally.

Except for sporadic efforts of the Mussolini regime and the more systematic current program of the Fund for the South (*Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, established in 1950), South Italy for decades has been treated with insalutary neglect by the national government. It is a commonplace among economists that income and productivity flourish with the widening of the market. This in turn requires the development of roads, railways, and communications. It is equally clear and has been recognized since the time of Adam Smith that productivity in and out of agriculture rises with certain types of government expenditure having great strategic import for economic growth: for example, adequate education to provide a labor force of high technical and professional quality; land reclamation, water conservation, and reforestation projects to improve soil fertility and to reduce losses from drought and floods. All these yield economic benefits that raise productivity and incomes broadly, by which in turn the demand for goods and services of all kinds can be increased, calling forth new and expanded activities in the non-agricultural sector.

Obvious as these principles may be, they have been conspicuous by their absence in national policy towards the South. Fortunately, recognition has finally come, so that today the principal difficulty is lack of capital rather than lack of the will to act.

Action and outlook

Two main contentions underlie this sketch of the problems of the postwar Italian economy. One of them is that capital shortage is the key to the unemployment question; the other that Italy confronts a massive task of structural readjustment. Large amounts of new capital must be invested in the coming decade, to raise the productivity of labor and to create perhaps 400,000 new jobs each year. In the process, this capital must finance a large-scale reorganization of the economy, to modernize agriculture and industry; to foster more expansion at the nodal points of potential growth; and to redress the balance between North and South. Increased saving and investment, not redis-

tribution of existing income, is the only sure road to the conquest of poverty and unemployment in Italy.

Equally important, the chronic deficit in the Italian balance of payments must be overcome, which again turns mainly upon increased productivity and accelerated economic development. Here the major problem is to expand exports more rapidly than imports. The task is an inherently difficult one. Italy must now import large quantities of raw materials and foodstuffs, which she pays for largely by exports of machines, chemicals, and textiles, and by earnings from tourism. Her exports face severe international competition. To expand them she must increase the productivity of her resources, to make her costs and prices competitive in the international market.

In a sense the central problem could be described as increased industrialization, but this designation is too simple and implies a foolhardy quest for autarchy. There is an unfortunate tendency in many quarters of the world today to make the facile assumption that more industrialization *per se* is the sole route to higher incomes. Acting on this uncritical premise, the various Communist regimes have vainly sought self-sufficiency in a blind autarchic policy that presupposes that each nation must have its own full range of heavy and light industries—its own steel mills, automobile, textile, and chemical plants, and so on. More than one of the so-called “underdeveloped” countries have followed the same lead, coupling their approach to the equally dubious premise that the new factories must be state-owned if the desired rate of progress is to be achieved. In part these futile programs flow from considerations of national pride and of military security, but their main rationale rests upon an uncritical theory of economic development. The fact that these endeavors have issued not in increased wealth and per capita incomes, but in colossal waste and in some cases ignominious failure constitutes impressive evidence that something is fatally wrong with the thinking that underlies them.

The basic error of the doctrine of total industrialization is that it denies the elementary economic principle of comparative advantage. Instead of selectively concentrat-

ing upon those industries and those sectors of agriculture that offer the best returns at home and from abroad, programs of across-the-board industrialization commit large amounts of capital to unpromising, high-cost ventures. By thwarting the fuller development of an international division of labor, these plans actually check the growth of national income, denying capital to promising sectors of development in order to invest it in unproductive plants, so defeating the declared purpose of the plans themselves.

Fortunately for Italy, she enjoys a lengthy tradition of responsible economic thinking. National policy today strongly emphasizes the need for increased freedom of world trade. On the domestic side, the main emphasis is not upon futile efforts towards self-sufficiency and resistance to needed adjustments under the pressure of competition and economical change. Quite the contrary. The dominant Italian view is that investment must aim to foster increased productivity, by centering it upon the most promising sectors of self-sustaining growth. On the one side, this means not that agriculture will be neglected in a large-scale shift to industry, but on the contrary that efforts will be made to expand production of intensive products such as fruits, vegetables, and olive oil, while reducing the present large-scale commitment to cereal crops. On the other, the intent is not to introduce a full program of heavy industry in the South, but to concentrate initially on more promising activities there—agricultural processing and light industries serving local markets. Coupled to freer international trade, this selective approach to investment means essentially that Italy is attempting to observe the principle of comparative advantage rather than to seek increased self-sufficiency in a highly regimented economy. Whatever sufficiency she does achieve would thereby flow from a genuine competitive advantage relative to her sister nations, which would not deny her opportunity to import lower cost goods and services from abroad.

Although increased investment and productivity have long been recognized as the key to the Italian problem, efforts to formulate an overall development program have only come quite recently. The first attempt of this kind was

the Fund for the South, which, of course, centers on that region alone. Early in 1955, the Italians presented to the Organization for European Economic Co-operation the so-called "Vanoni Plan," named for former Budget Minister Ezio Vanoni, who died during the presentation of his program to Parliament in March, 1956. Since that time the Vanoni Plan has functioned more as a political talking-point than a reality, and its ultimate formal adoption now seems quite problematical. However, many of its strategic assumptions and specific lines of proposed action are now in force. Brief reference to it is accordingly appropriate.

The Vanoni Plan proposes to create four million jobs between 1955 and 1964, to bring about practicable full employment without inflation and in conjunction with the achievement of an enduring balance in Italy's international payments. It calls for a five per cent rise in national income each year, and for an increase of saving and investment from the present rate of 20 per cent of annual gross national product to a terminal quota of 25 per cent. For the full decade, net investment is to reach almost \$40 billion, of which all but about seven per cent is to come from internal saving as distinguished from investment from abroad. Consumption per head is to rise moderately, but the emphasis is to hold down the rise of money wages to permit the unemployed and the underemployed to find productive jobs.

While the overall magnitudes of the plan—income, saving, investment, consumption, imports, exports, employment, and the labor force — are in consolidated tabular form, the intent is not to plan centrally the investment of capital or the character of national output. Thus the program can better be described as framework planning rather than as detailed and centralized direction of the Russian type. Instead, while government investment plays a major role, the plan does not contemplate the destruction of the existing system of private, profit-seeking enterprise by any means, but instead its encouragement by provision of a more propitious environment. To create that environment, about two-thirds of all net investment will be through government agencies—to reorganize agriculture through land

reform and mechanization; to develop public works in transport, power, communications, land reclamation, and water conservation; and to provide an indeterminately large amount of new housing. These government projects are expected to regenerate the poor and stagnant areas, many of which are agricultural, though not entirely in the South, and to bring direct economies to agriculture and industry. Through the expected derivative rise of incomes, the projects would enlarge domestic markets, inducing further growth of the manufacturing and service sectors of the economy, particularly in these poorer areas. The remaining third of total net investment would be left for straight private investment, mainly to reorganize, improve, and develop the already better-situated industrial sector, which lies largely in the North.

Italy currently is straining her economic resources to the limit to follow a rough and pragmatic pattern of this sort. The task is one of heroic magnitude and the traditional initiative, creativeness, and self-reliance of her people are her most precious assets for this great endeavor. While it is by no means certain that the outcome will correspond to the possibly over-optimistic dimensions of the Vanoni Plan itself, the rapid rate of postwar economic progress and the eventually favorable demographic tendencies provide substantial ground for expectation that the problems of poverty and unemployment can eventually be largely overcome. If Italy could depend upon a greater amount of foreign investment, these prospects could be brought much closer. Surely such investment would be thoroughly sound, for it would make her place in the Western security system far more secure in the dangerous world in which we now unquestionably live.

TRENDS



POETRY 1957

No account of Italian poetry published in 1957 can overlook an important literary event of the year before — the publication of a collection of poems which returned to the literary limelight the great poet of the generation between the two wars, Eugenio Montale. *La Bufera ed altro* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1956), whose penultimate poem is entitled, à la Villon, “Piccolo Testamento,” spoke out in the poetic debate which has impassioned literary critics for the last twelve years, in the name of an experience that had been considered a part of a concluded historical phase of the past. Actually, if this experience is historical and temporal, and hence perishable, the voice of the poetry born of this experience surpasses it and outlives it. Thus Montale, who symbolized for an entire generation just what that generation was *not*, what it did *not* want, its uneasiness and *mal de vivre*, appears to us today in his true poetic essence. He reveals himself as the poet of a circumscribed experience which is narrated in solitude, sometimes in harsh tones reminiscent of the Ligurian dialect, and which is suspicious of any contact other than that permitted by the slender thread of memory or by an external world (often evocations of mythical women) that is no more than a mirror for the poet. Perhaps one day, when we are further removed from the events of the last thirty years, we will no longer stop at the obvious historical and psychological facts (such as the repugnance of Italian literary culture for fascism) in our search for a precedent for Montale’s literary adventure, but instead will go back to the Leopardi of the “Vita Solitaria” and the “Piccoli Idilli,” to that life in suspension set in the midst

of a nature which the poet voluntarily immobilizes and annihilates.

Montale's new work (actually it includes "Finisterre" published twice previously but now unobtainable) commands the critic's attention with its absolute fidelity to the poetics of *Ossi di seppia* and *Le occasioni*, by its rejection of the inevitability of events. However, if there is an attenuation or regression in Montale's poetry, by nature harsh, rugged and dry, invulnerable to the attacks of the imagination, this weakening is not due, in his new work, to a dwindling of subject matter (the romantic loss of inspiration) or to an omnipresent metaphorical attitude that frustrates every narrative opening. On the contrary, it is a result of a thickening of the subject matter, of the well-defined presence of facts and events which besiege the poet in his refuge of silence and tenuous memories; because the sources that really occasion Montale's poetry are precisely those delicate threads of memory, always about to break, which Montale holds by one end only, as for example in presenting his women, who are but gestures, shadows, disappearing into the darkness of the void. The poet resists the attack of the storm (*bufera*) and the "monsoons," clasping an amulet in his hands, like Dora Markus, and taking refuge in his inner world, in the discreet reserve of his motifs. Typical in this sense is "Primavera Hitleriana," the obsessed recollection of Hitler's visit to Florence, in which after the first anguished chronicle of events, the incident is transported onto a plane of language that is strictly *stilnuovo*, anticipated by the quotation from a sonnet attributed to Dante and addressed to Giovanni Quirini. And the woman, who is an extension of the poet, his witness and his mirror, assumes, as in the fourteenth-century sonnet, the idealizing name of Clizia, the mythological woman who was turned into a sunflower.

This poetry, in which psychological experience is as if annulled and petrified in words, stands as an absolute example and literary beacon around which all the most recent Italian poetry revolves, even if only in an effort to keep as far from it as possible. To go to this extreme margin of Montale's poetic experience and cite a certain kind of poetry in 1957 which prefers paraphrases to dazzling images, ex-

planatory discourses to allusions, we must speak of the Piedmontese (by adoption) Giovanni Arpino, author of *Prezzo dell'oro* (Milan: Poeti dello Specchio, Mondadori, 1957). Arpino, who is also the author of a good novel, is directly inspired, it seems to me, by the Cesare Pavese of *Lavorare stanca*, by that idealization of the Piedmontese way of life of which Pavese was the greatest representative, which draws its inspiration from an obstinate love of the harshly worked land, from a provincialism conscious of the value of local experience and suspicious of any linguistic *préciosité*. This poetry, which has its force but also its moments of monotony with its cadences that have the ring of prose, is built around clear-cut psychological moments and does not scorn vivid sketches of life and death. The most often repeated, and also the most forceful images, are those in which the poet describes his human condition as that of a man who painfully clears a path for himself through a world pressing in on him and weaving threads of deceit and barbed wires of hate around him. The images of the net ("rete"), the barbed wire ("reticolato"), the world as a prison, return again and again in throbbing phrases and form the expressive core of all his poetry.

The Friulan poet Pier Paolo Pasolini, one of the winners of the Premio Viareggio in poetry (*Le Ceneri di Gramsci*, Milan: Garzanti, 1957) is bound like Arpino to a form of expression that is "anti-hermetic," but he has a much richer and more complex personality. It would not be an exaggeration to say that his poetry is the newest, most original and robust that Italian literature has produced in these last few years. He does not hesitate to introduce into the traditionally learned and high-flown Italian poetic language, an experience of life expressed in all its burning actuality, with all the waste in expression with which this experience translates itself into intellectual adventure. And there is a certain linguistic echo of popular speech in his language, though raised to a level of intellectual experience; (it should not be forgotten that he has already written poems in the Friulan dialect and a novel, *Ragazzi di vita*, strongly flavored with the dialect of Rome). This strange mixture in expression has its moments of real poetry, poetry that is born

of the passionate and eloquent warmth of a continuous discourse in search of a precise definition of a mood or a moral adventure. It is poetry whose music is harsh, and whose intellectual burden is sometimes irritating, as when Pasolini manages to write an actual critical essay in verse, indeed very interesting and instructive, on Picasso's painting; but it is something new, important and positive for Italian poetry since Montale. There is, for example, a new, casual use of enjambement, though conforming to a rigorous internal sense of the poetic discourse. And there is the violent cut of the verses, and the caesura, that seems to be dictated by an order that is more logical than melodic, but that relieves the verses of any burden of useless rhetoric. To find comparisons, we should perhaps have to cite European poets who draw on popular inspiration, such as Aragon or even the Russian Mayakovsky, not so much because of a common predisposition toward a poetry known as *engagée*, as for their common ambition to carry certain elements belonging to the structure of logical discourse over into their poetic discourse. But whereas in Aragon these elements give rise to an amplification in tone, a rhetoric of explanatory song, in Pasolini the poetry of his verses arises quite naturally and modestly during a narration that would seem destined to be mere chronicle. What is really poetry in Pasolini is his capacity unexpectedly to throw open the horizons of his explanatory narratives upon faces and scenes, sometimes caught only in glimpses, sometimes seen in a bright light, but always relived in an atmosphere of intense lyricism. One thinks especially of the poem "Terra di lavoro" which is among the most beautiful poetic portraits of the face of southern Italy: a picture of people and scenery, relived and narrated during a trip in a third-class train compartment. There is in it something that brings to mind the tragic, gnarled landscape of Lucania sketched from a train in memorable verse by the turn-of-the-century poet-traveler, Valéry Larbaud.

In order to individualize better the dramatic nucleus of Pasolini's poetry, we should above all stress the contrast between life and history which he lives and sings throughout the whole book. The book opens with a review of places in

Italy that are literary commonplaces, so heavy is the burden they carry of allusion to the great poets who have sung their beauty in the past: we are reminded of Horace and "candidum alta nive Soracte," of D'Annunzio's cities of silence—Lucca with its Ilaria del Carretto, Pisa and Orvieto with their history and their monuments; but this is not the Italy that interests the poet. His is the Italy that he contrasts with it: the army of the poor camped before the gates of Rome, this population in cabins and huts, with all its sensuality, its sadness and its prehistoric and pre-human joy; the children who learn to make and live the gestures of adults before their time; the southern peasants, bound to a millennial pre-Christian civilization based on suspicion and patriarchal wisdom. And even in the heart of these people, as in his own heart, Pasolini observes the same fundamental contrasts. There are, on the one hand, the people tempted by the future, who organize under banners with songs and myths; and on the other, these same people who express their satisfaction and pain in living their lives in the present, a life in which pain and joy always happen in the same way, are always felt and expressed in the same way. And the poet, who would like to share his people's fever of growth and history, remains attached to what he calls the eternal, unproductive act of dreaming.

Another winner of the Premio Viareggio, Sandro Penna (*Poesie*, Milan: Garzanti, 1957), far removed from Pasolini, is tightly bound to an autobiographic, individualistic vein of expression whose poetry is more tenuous and subtle. The anthologists of contemporary poetry place him, in fact, within the orbit of Saba and Montale. No longer very young (born in 1906) but not yet old, he deserves to be cited for the fidelity that he has maintained throughout his career to a certain poetic ideal. Full of melodious suggestiveness, his poetry still remains humbly faithful to an everyday vision of life which he expresses in rapid and evocative sketches. One might say of him, to use a favorite expression of the fourteenth-century Tuscan writer Franco Sacchetti, that he passes through life "trasognando," in a sort of dream, unable to grasp the exact contours of the objects around him. The images he prefers are always extreme, seen either in a

blinding light that transfixes and immobilizes, or in a dizzying movement like trains speeding by or leaves suddenly scattered by the wind. There are sketches in which adolescent cyclists appear and disappear in a cloud of dust, and others where soldiers kill their free time in dreams of sex. Sometimes lively groups of sailors pass in the squares, sometimes, in brief agonized verses, the poet laments his lost love. Beneath the gracious melody of the love poems, which is often coupled with an ethereal lightness in tone, there is a certain bitterness, like a graceful gesture of disappointment that is almost feline. Love is for Sandro Penna, as it was for Di Giacomo, a tree whose fruit hides its poison beneath its resplendent colors.

Mario Luzi, one of the most learned of contemporary "hermetic" poets, winner of the Premio Marzotto 1957 (*Onore del vero*, Venice: Neri Pozza, 1957), far from Penna's impressionism, is dedicated to a poetry of recollection. But Luzi's memories are not the tenuous ones of Eugenio Montale. They are, to use one of his own expressions, "the living and sanguinary return of time." The poet is capable of mentally scouring through the land of his memory, house by house, until he finds the most beloved faces and lights up the darkest corners, searching out in them the deepest roots of his country and his people. The poet's affection for the past also indicates his desire to escape from a human landscape rendered foreign to him by a lack of love; and, positively, it reveals a heart seeking to gratify a profound thirst for love.

As a final important literary event of 1957, we must note the volume of poems by the Genoese poet Angelo Barile entitled *Quasi sereno* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1957). Some of these poems have already been published, others represent interesting new work. Barile's poetry is at times capable of a lyrical surge and a tenderness of affection which are rare in contemporary poetry. Naturally, there is sometimes the risk of a diluted, too soft, melodiousness, but fortunately the poet's innate musical sensuality is attenuated and uplifted in a religious aspiration that assures Barile's poetry of an ever more serene equilibrium.

In closing it is fitting to call to mind the death of Umberto Saba (who is spoken of elsewhere in this issue), of Clemente Rebora, and of the Tuscan poet Vieri Nannetti. I would like, moreover, to mention, in what Croce calls the zone of non-poetry, a moving volume of verses by a twelve-year old boy, Giovanni Serafini, entitled *Barchette di Carta* (*I.Q.* I, 2, *Items*, Milan: Mondadori, 1957). The great master of philological studies, Giorgio Pasquali once said that a children's literature does not exist; there exists only a part of literature that can also be understood by children. In the same vein one could say that there exists a part of the world of dreams and natural poetry of children which can also be understood by adults. This book by Giovanni Serafini is not written by a child prodigy (child prodigies don't exist anyway); it is a book of moving thoughts, in which young Serafini, in the name of childhood sends a message to the grown-ups. This message of love is entrusted to little paper boats; he can only hope that a favorable wind will carry them across to the other side.

DANTE DELLA TERZA

BOOKS

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A NEW "NEW LIFE"

The keen and sincere interest that the English speaking world has shown in Dante throughout the centuries has in recent years given abundant evidence of a renewed vitality. The current year has been especially prolific, and we have witnessed the publication not only of another interesting volume by Dorothy L. Sayers (*Further Papers on Dante*, Harper and Bros.), but also of a challenging work by Bernard Stambler (*Dante's Other World: The "Purgatorio" as a Guide to the Divine Comedy*, New York University Press), of a much needed translation of Francesco De Sanctis' penetrating essays on the *Divine Comedy* (*De Sanctis on Dante*, Essays edited and translated by Joseph Rossi and Alfred Galpin, University of Wisconsin Press), and of two new translations of *La Vita Nuova*: one by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the other by a gifted young student, Mark L. Musa. I feel that, although Emerson completed his version in 1843, one can call his a "new" translation since it was discovered only a few years ago and was not made available in print until this year by Prof. J. Ches-

ley Mathews (in the spring and fall issues of the *Harvard Library Bulletin*).

Needless to say, in Italy as well as abroad, the general reader associates Dante's name with his main work, the *Divine Comedy*, just as, to choose two other great names, he associates Boccaccio and Cervantes with the *Decameron* and *Don Quixote* respectively, although they authored several other "minor" but significant works. Just the same, one of Dante's minor works, *La Vita Nuova*, is fairly well known outside of Italy, and it has repeatedly been translated into English. This is not surprising if we bear in mind that *La Vita Nuova*, besides being a charming little book, is to a large extent the idealized account of the poet's youthful love for Beatrice, and that the thirty-one poems and accompanying prose explanations are extremely important for the understanding of the personality of the mature poet of the *Divine Comedy*. After all, wasn't the *Divine Comedy* a fulfillment of the promise Dante made in the closing prose passage of the *New Life*, namely that he would not write of Beatrice again until he could

say of her what had never been told of any woman? The *New Life* was written when Dante was still young (he composed the first sonnet at eighteen), when he was an active member of the "new writers" of Florence; and as such it breathes the freshness of the dreams of a young romantic soul who felt "renovated" by love, and who had not yet become embittered by the tragedy of the political life of his beloved Florence, and by a long, undeserved exile.

Since the first complete published translation by Joseph Garrow (Florence, 1846), *La Vita Nuova* (whose first complete Italian edition was issued as late as 1723) has been translated into English numerous times. Outstanding among the various editions are: the one by D. G. Rossetti (1861) which, although free at times, has a high degree of charm, and the one by C. E. Norton (1867), which is excellent, faithful to the original, and enriched by essays and notes. The early part of the twentieth century saw, in rapid succession, the publication of three translations: one by Frances De May (1902), one by Luigi Ricci (1903), and one by T. Okey and P. H. Wickstead (1906). Now, a little over half a century later, we are presented with a new translation by a student of Rutgers University. Mr. Musa's translation was accepted for publication in 1956 and he became the first Rutgers undergraduate to have a

book published by the Rutgers University Press.

It has been said that the *New Life* often repels the modern reader, and that it takes a long study to understand it. This, I believe, is only partly true, and true also of many a well-known "classic." Undoubtedly, the *New Life*, like the *Divine Comedy* for that matter, has never been and never will be "popular" in the sense that a modern best-seller is popular. But there is no reason why many among the thousands of readers who in recent years have been purchasing the paperback and other inexpensive editions of the *Divine Comedy* (or parts of it) should not be interested in, and actually enjoy, reading the delicate pages of the *New Life*.

Mr. Musa's version is accurate and pays faithful homage to the original. Moreover, and this should spread the good word and attract many new readers, Mr. Musa's translation is not only clear and readable, but it often succeeds in captivating a great deal of the charm of the Italian text. This readability and freshness apply to the rendition of the prose passages as well as of the poems, which have been done in prose themselves (Mr. Musa has included also the Italian of all the poems). Evidently, Mr. Musa is acquainted with the learned commentaries of the *New Life*, and this has helped him to translate difficult and at times controversial passages in a manner which is suf-

ficiently clear not to demand the help of a note. To quote a self-evident instance, he translates these two lines: "Amor e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa/Sì come il saggio in suo dittare pone" as follows: "Love and the gracious heart are but one thing, as Guinizelli tells us in his rhyme," thus identifying for the general reader the mysterious "wise man". (This does not imply, of course, that the general reader will not have to look up who Guinizelli was!)

The language of Mr. Musa is modern, and the reading flows unencumbered. Some readers who are acquainted with the Italian text may occasionally balk at the choice of a particular word (for instance, "The most patrician of colors" for "nobilissimo colore," and "frivolous" for "fabuloso"), but these are minor points. There are, however, a couple of true slips. In the eighth chapter, at the end of the first prose selection, Dante, as usual, tells how he divided his poem. Mr. Musa correctly translates: "Then I devised these two sonnets, the first beginning: *Weep lovers*, and the second: *Death so cruel*." However, in translating the sonnets, he changed his translation, and instead of finding *Weep lovers* and *Death so cruel*, we find *If love himself weep* and *Brute Death*. The second slip occurs after the long *canzone* of chapter XXIII, which Mr. Musa inadvertently calls a "sonnet."

Several distinguished Dante scholars have already express-

ed their admiration for this most recent translation of *La Vita Nuova*. Indeed, John Ciardi, himself a distinguished translator of Dante, has gone so far as to state that in some ways Mr. Musa's is the best English rendering. After this, I can think of no better way to conclude this review than to give the reader a sample of Mr. Musa's smooth translation of one of the sonnets of the *New Life*:

You join with other ladies to
deride me

And do not think, my lady,
for what cause

I cut so awkward and grotesque
a figure

When I stand gazing at your
lovely form.

Could you but know my soul
in charity,

Then yours would melt from
its accustomed scorn;

For Love, when he beholds me
near to you,

Takes on a cruel, bold new
confidence

And puts my frightened senses
to the sword.

Murdering this one, driving
that one out,

Till only he is left to look at
you;

Thus, though his changeling,
I am not so changed

But that I still can hear in
my own soul

My outcast senses mourning in
their pain.

[C. S.]

MINOR MORAVIA

Alberto's Moravia's *Roman Tales* (Farrar, Straus and Cudahy: New York 1957) should be welcomed wholeheartedly in the excellent English versions of Angus Davidson. They have been well chosen from among the dozens of *racconti romani* which Moravia has been steadily producing for years. Grant that the novels are fantasias: these tales, then are the finger exercises of the virtuoso.

It is not only the Roman milieu that determines their genus. In so simple a matter as length they create their pattern: that they generally run to seven pages would suggest they were mostly written for the *terza pagina*, a mechanical confinement which then, of course, the artist may turn to aesthetic account. In the simple matter of narration, they are all told in the first person by the protagonist: they are in effect elaborated anecdotes. And in the simple matter of social setting they concern mostly the lower class; not the down-and-outers, the wretched poor, the cadging criminals, but rather the "semi-skilled" worker with a few superfluous lire rustling in his pocket. The characters, then, have some choice of action: they may change jobs, stand on their dignity, explore the criminal life, intrigue at love, and in general circulate about with the freedom of having the price of a trip to Ostia or a *mescita di vino*. Their relative poverty determines, of course,

the circles in which they move, yet they are far from being mere resolutions of the vectors of economic determinism. One does not feel, as so often in stories about "the poor" that both author and characters envision redemption through riches, salvation from the hell of "grinding poverty" and translation to the upper spheres of bourgeois ease in a heaven outfitted with Major Appliances. They are the Arcadian poor who do not yet see themselves exclusively engaged in class struggle; rather, they take life the way it is. Though the social reformer might object, the reader may be at least momentarily and imaginatively grateful that Moravia's lower class has not been sentimentalized.

In these stories the author, and translator, confront one of the basic problems of contemporary fiction: the problem of idiom. Are the masses really inarticulate? Do they communicate by short rough mutilations of grammar? Does their eloquence consist in a modulation of grunts? When the time comes, are they capable, as some writers seem to think, of rising to a strain of rough-hewn "éloquence qui se moque de l'éloquence"? Whatever the answers, the writer himself cannot help but stylize. Hemingway seems first to have explored the vein so common ever since; in *To Have and Have Not* he reached a *ne plus ultra* which he himself has respected by turning to a nobly simple representa-

tion of foreign speech (Spanish and Italian) to approximate English. Can one go much beyond Harry Morgan's dying words, "A man . . . ain't got no hasn't got any can't really isn't any way out"? Moravia chooses what may be an easy solution; the translator aptly quotes from Moravia's preface to *The Woman of Rome*: "Two ways were open to me in relating the imaginary autobiography of the character I had chosen to portray—I could either adopt a realistic, photographic, spoken style of language . . . a clumsy, poor dialect, incapable of expressing more than a limited number of feelings and incidents; or I could make my characters speak in my customary style, as I have in all my other books . . ." The result is inevitably, given our current conventions, to surprise and even jar the reader. After a Quixotic attempt at mugging and robbery, the protagonist narrates ("The Terror of Rome"): "I said to Lorusso as we went: 'I hardly need to tell you what an idiot you are. . . . Why in the world did you take it into your head to hit him like that?'" The effect is unconscious humor and self-mockery, pervasive in all the stories, reminiscent of the stylized language of Vergil's shepherds or Cervantes' dogs in his parody of the pastoral convention, *El Coloquio de los Perros*. How much richer the effect is than that of a possible contemporary American equivalent: "So we walk, and I says to Lorus-

so: 'You dope . . . Why'd ya hafta go 'n slug him like that?'" Apart from the writer's necessity to stylize, it is time for American writers to reappraise the idiom of the "folk," whoever they may be.

After so many explorations of the drinking habits of suburban America, after a surfeit of misty sentiment and complacent farce set in Ireland, after a spate of quiet frustration in the English provinces, it is refreshing to have in English a collection of stories almost primitive in their simplicity, novel in their stylization of ambiance, complex in their presentation of unwitting frustration and neither mawkish nor farcical wit, and suggestive of a whole, though discontinuous, tradition. Besides Vergil and Cervantes, one could also mention Boccaccio, the early Chekhov and Kafka. In their improvisatory anecdotal tone, Moravia's "tales" ask comparison with Boccaccio: there is much of the "jape" about them. But in their complex mingling of unconscious irony, pathetic self-assertion, preservative self-delusion, and potential farce, they seem very much akin to early Chekhov: not the Chekhov of "Gooseberries" or "In the Ravine," but rather the early master of wit and pathos and the grotesque, in, for example, "Fat and Thin," "Whitebrow," and others in the early collection *Motley Tales*. Some may seem too neatly turned. So often the ineffectual round-shouldered protagonist-narrator seems fated

from the start to lose his girl to a burly handsome friend or, ironically, to an older paunchier colleague, and almost always to make a botch of his simple-minded projects.

The *Roman Tales* are a remarkable cabinet of characters; eccentric, ineffectual, self-deluded, craven, ranting, but never reduced to the clinical terms of psychopathology. In the midst of absurd or disconcerting turns of events, they instinctively manoeuvre to adjust their integrity. The elements of farce are saved from crudity by their often comic sense of personal integrity: less the pratfall than the ludicrous contortions of a cat that manages, though ruffled, to land on all fours. In the story about the effeminate, would-be uxorious husband who likes to help around the house and keep his wife company at her woman's chores, the inevitable happens: she leaves him. He goes to see her mother, who handles him gently. "I wanted to ask if I might see Agnese, but I realized it was useless; also I was afraid, if I saw her, that I might lose my head and do or say something stupid. So I went away, and from that day to this I have never seen my wife. Someday, perhaps, she will come back, seeing that husbands like me are not to be met with every day of the week. But she's not going to cross the threshold of my house unless she first explains to me why it was that she left me." The mode is minor, but it is minor Moravia, and very good. [L.N.]

DIVISMO

Giulio Cesare Castello's book *Il Divismo* (a term including both "stardom" and "star-system"), subtitled *Mitologia del cinema*, has been elegantly produced by the Edizioni Radio Italiana (Rome: 1957), with a profusion of excellent photographs and an exhaustive and accurate "filmography." It is not the usual gossipy ephemeral account of Hollywood nor is it the usual psychological diagnosis of what remains for the supercilious author a morbid phenomenon. Yet its staple must necessarily be anecdotes and trivia, often ludicrous and grotesque; and, in order to achieve some comprehensive view, its author must indulge in psychological analysis and social history. The historical perspective of the book extends from the turn of the century to the present, for the reason that a consuming interest among the public in the private velleities and eccentricities of actors did not actually exist until the advent of motion pictures, and since, in one form or another, *divismo* continues today. One might wince, in the later chapters, at seeing the names of such recent glamour queens as Brigitte Bardot or Kim Novak pop up on the pages of a "serious" book. Yet it is only their contemporaneity that may make them seem out of place beside Lyda Borelli, Clara Bow or Theda Bara. As they too recede in time their careers will take on "period" qualities. To begin with, then, there is every

justification for such a book as this.

The author states his purposes commendably in the Foreword. "Concerning *divismo*—a fascinating and complex phenomenon which involves the history of both cinema and contemporary manners—there is a vast body of writing, but mostly of a journalistic character in the most trivial, frivolous and often scandalous sense of the term. It is scattered and ephemeral (when indeed it is not prompted, as very often happens, by motives of publicity). On the other hand, no treatises exist which have faced the phenomenon with the rigor of an historian, evaluating it in all its aspects, economic, sociological, artistic, moral, etc. Yet, apart from those works which touch upon single aspects of *divismo* or which try to set it within a larger frame, for years a literature has been flourishing in the form of biographies, autobiographies, diaries and memoirs, which has served the purpose of accumulating a body of testimony, more or less direct, often precious and always suggestive, toward a documentation and an evaluation of *divismo*." (p.5) As Mr. Castello realizes, the evidence must be sifted, compared, and then selected; he is aware of the complexity of any judgment: the bare testimony of box office receipts is tangible enough, but what actually accounts for the popularity of Mary Pickford? Or if her popularity is taken as a hard fact of history, how can one plaus-

ibly relate it to the temper of the times? The author must rely often upon his own judgment, which is generally good and tolerant, and upon his own obviously comprehensive knowledge of the films themselves.

As far as the structure of the work is concerned, Mr. Castello follows, as much as possible, a chronological scheme; at times he will treat a variety of *divismo* and at times one of the "great," irreducible figures. His chapters are as follows: I, Femmes fatales in Italy during the era of Giolitti (ca. 1915); II, A great lover: Francesca Bertini; III, Those who ruined the war (i.e., les hommes fatales); IV, The sweetheart of the world (Mary Pickford, etc.); V, Ingenues and romantics; VI, The "divine" Garbo; VII, Marlene; VIII, The queen of glamour and elegance (Pola Negri, Gloria Swanson, etc.); IX, From the "It Girl" to the "Platinum Blonde;" X, Venuses and other deities of love; XI, Douglas, the American (Fairbanks, Sr.); XII, The sincere and the sophisticated; XIII, Rudy, or Latin fascination; XIV, The successors of Valentino; XV, The tough guys (Gable, Bogart); XVI, Masks of comedians and stars of the "Musical;" XVII, European mythology; XVIII, The *Neo-divismo* of the "well-stacked" (Gina Lollobrigida, Silvana Mangano, etc.). Each of the chapters deals also with lesser figures, draws analogies from the past to the present, and proposes its own set of generaliza-

tions. The fact that the book begins and ends with Italy is not, as one might think, indicative of a nationalistic bias: the author seems quite right in claiming that the first great public wave of madness over movie stars occurred in Italy before the first World War; and one can hardly deny that Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren almost themselves constitute *divismo* in 1957. Naturally, the bulk of the book is dedicated to the stars associated either wholly or partly with Hollywood. At the same time, the author, with his commendably international perspective, deals adequately with those who "stayed at home," that is, in Europe or England, and with those who tried Hollywood on its own terms and either faded or left in a huff. In its proportions, then, the book is well balanced and comprehensive.

At first one is struck by the amount of quotations in the book; sometimes the author will quote a page or more at a time, from magazines, memoirs of stars and producers, biographies. However trivial the subject matter outside the frame of this book, it generally evokes and illumines; the sources are often nearly inaccessible and forgotten; at one time they were properly considered trivial, but with the passage of time they have the fascination of a medieval laundry-list or a Renaissance billet-doux. To mention a few: Mrs. D. W. Griffith, *When the Movies Were Young*, 1925; Samuel

Goldwyn, *Behind the Screen*, 1923; Charles Chaplin, *My Trip Abroad*, 1922; etc. The tone of the author himself is always tolerant, fairly sensitive to humor and irony, most often judicious but sometimes uncritical and even gullible. At times the narrative slips into a mere descriptive catalogue of actor after actor. The book, indeed, might have been better had the author imposed more of an argued structure on his material and treated it more consistently from perhaps an ironic perspective. In not doing so, he avoids the pitfall of phoney generalization and he avoids also the easy way out of a superciliously ironic, and therefore inevitably falsifying, tone.

Of particular interest to the student of modern Italian taste are the early chapters on the silent screen in Italy. Familiar figures of the past, such as Lyda Borelli, Francesca Bertini, and Alberto Collo, are revived in the fullness of their eccentricities and vicissitudes. Mr. Castello quite properly makes much of the movies of the time as manifestation of *lo stile liberty* (named after a famous London firm of furnishers): what in France would be known as *art nouveau*, the floral style imitating "natural" forms, suggesting possibly an elaboration of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. It is the style captured to all eternity in an image of the late Leo Longanesi: "Da un vaso a sedano spuntano quattro fiori malati."

[L.N.]

THE FATHERLAND IN MARBLE

The Viareggio Literary Prize has been subjected this year to much justified criticism. The most striking peculiarity was its being cut into twelve portions, revealing, to say the least, a considerable amount of dissension and uncertainty among the judges. We should recall, however, that even normally the prize is divided into four categories: fiction, poetry, "first published work," and non-fictional literature. One of the books which received a third of the prize in this category seems to have gathered a solid consensus of opinion: *La patria di marmo*, by Marcello Venturoli, (Pisa Nistri-Lischi, 1957). It is in some ways a unique book: a slice of modern Italian life centering on the biography of a monument. The "fatherland in marble" of the title is the monument to Victor Emmanuel II, known in official parlance as the "altar of the fatherland," aesthetically the mootest structure in Rome.

Venturoli's book is far from being simply a history of the monument from the time when, shortly after the unification of Italy, the possibility of erecting such an architectural emblem was conceived, to the day of its official inauguration (though it was still unfinished) in 1911; nor is it simply, or even predominantly, a biography of its major artifex, Count Giuseppe Sacconi, who devoted practically his whole life and energies to this single work. The thread

provided by Sacconi's life and by the vicissitudes of the building is continuously and intentionally lost in the wide canvas of a work which, in 500 large pages of thick print, spans the last quarter of the past century and the first decade of our own. It touches on all aspects of national life, from politics to fashions, from colonial war to financial scandals, from royal visits (the Tsar, Edward VII, the Kaiser) to class struggle and general strikes. If the book has a major theme, however undeclared, it is a rather obvious one: the contrast between an official, "marble" image of the *patria* and the fluid landscape of national life in all its variety. In the long years during which the monument grew, this theme may have frequently emerged in terms of open and articulate conflict: the conflict between a practical, "non-poetic" concept of the nation's problems and necessities as they were often preached for instance by exponents of the Socialist Party, and that taste for the glorious gesture and the symbolism of patriotism which found some of its outlets in a part of d'Annunzio's work, or in the activities of the Nationalist Party. Such contrasts are known also elsewhere, but in Italy they were probably felt with greater urgency, as when Giuseppe Prezzolini wrote in 1910: "Nationalism is much more dangerous for us because with its vagueness and magiloquent imprecision it is above all likely to furnish ma-

terial for our rhetorical inclinations, and distract thought from those practical problems and precise interests which had begun to preoccupy the Italian people, and without solving which, they will never be a Nation." (Quoted on p. 461, from the review *La voce*.)

It is difficult to suggest the variety of information, of interesting insights into the life of the period, of revealing episodes and vignettes that this book contains. To choose at random among the "lighter" items: the triumphant reception of Buffalo Bill in Rome (p. 101); Verdi's telegram on being offered the title of Marquis of Busseto, ending: "This does not exclude my gratitude which will be much greater if nomination cancelled" (p. 133); d'Annunzio's famous *coup de théâtre* while a member of Parliament, walking ostentatiously from a seat on the Right to one on the Left ("I go toward Life;" p. 191); young King Victor Emmanuel III watching "with his customary, dignified secretiveness" a parade of fifty automobiles in May 1902, flanked by two army majors who were entrusted by the War Ministry to study the importance of the new means of transportation (p. 212); the fall of the campanile of St. Mark in Venice, with no casualties, an event which had international repercussions among Venice-lovers (14 July 1902; p. 235, and the whole chapter, *passim*); Italian repercussions of the Russian revolt of 1905, with

Giacomo Puccini, Antonio Fogazzaro, and others, uniting in public protest against the arrest of Maxim Gorki (p. 338); the opening, in a Rome theatre, in January 1908, of d'Annunzio's milestone in the history of patriotic aestheticism, the verse play *La nave*, when even the official organ of the Socialist Party was "caught by an inferiority complex" and praised it (p. 415); the reception given to two Italian heroes of an automobile race from Peking to Paris, Prince Borghese and the journalist Barzini, who were greeted, on arriving in the French capital, with the march from *Aida*.

All countries, to be sure, possess official monuments which are not usually praised as great works of art; and the Victor Emmanuel monument in Rome may be an extreme case also on account of its size and location. Minor as the consolation may be to those who aesthetically detest it, Venturoli's book relates in detail how it came about; on the artistic history (projects, choice of materials, relationship between Sacconi and sculptors, etc.) and on the administrative history (parliamentary debates, royal committees, etc.) his research has been painstaking and its results can be regarded as definitive; we may not like the final product, but it is a sort of relief to have it "explained". To give the supremely obvious instance, on page 77 and ff., Venturoli by telling the story of the selection of *botticino* as the particular type

of marble used, gives some sort of justification for the famous and universally deplored "caddaverous white" of the monument. Yet, to summarize, the main value of the book is in the immersion which it permits into a period of Italian life not as widely explored as its great interest might warrant. Italian history has always been quite peculiar; the period immediately following Italy's appearance on the world stage as a unified and "modern" country is, both for positive and for negative reasons, among the most fascinating. Here we are reminded of some of the period's significant events and of many of its major and minor characters. Incidentally, and to end on a pedantic note, Italian typography could have done better with the illustrations, extremely well-chosen and interesting as they are; and an Index of Names would have been welcome.

[P. M. P.]

THE MAESTRO

As a light informal biography of Arturo Toscanini, *The Magic Baton* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1957) by Filippo Sacchi is well conceived and well composed. It sketches, incisively and authoritatively, the trajectory of his public career from the momentous night in Rio de Janeiro when at the age of nineteen he mounted the podium and conducted the whole of *Aida*, to the last days in Riverdale when at the age of eighty-nine he was editing just before his

death his recorded performance of *Aida*. Though it is quite properly the story of extraordinary talent, luck, and implacable will, it is also an historical evocation of the cultural past. Our memory of Toscanini is still so fresh that we may be inadvertently surprised at recalling that his eminence at La Scala dates from 1898 and that by 1908 he, an Italian, had commanded a free hand at the utterly Teutonic Metropolitan. Indeed, when he began to conduct opera, the manners and attitudes he eventually succeeded in remolding (the obsessive and irrelevant social associations of opera, the tyranny of the public and the *prime donne*, the operatic tradition of Bellini and his epigones) were the direct inheritance of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Inevitably, Mr. Sacchi intrigues his reader with bits of social history, which are properly subordinated in context, but which resound more authentically than the actual character of his subject (a friend, a figure recently dead and therefore venerable) whose full lineaments cannot be traced at this short distance in history. One is grateful for the evocation of nineteenth-century Parma, for the characterization of Toscanini's passionately *garibaldino* father, and for the whole life of music in those days, marginally but vividly suggested. Layers are properly distinguished: the age of Bellini and Stendhal, the complacency and then the revolu-

tion of the middle of the century, imported "diabolism", and the emergence of a new age: "Even Boito—the Boito whom we have all known, old, loaded with honours, senator, president of academies, ornament of aristocratic salons—had taken hashish in his youth." We may be moved by Toscanini's devotion to his friend, the fated Catalani; we may also marvel, in a mingling of amusement and pathos, at how sharply the libretto of his *Edmea* evokes the age. "Edmea is a sort of Ophelia of the Elbe. When the brave Oberto departs she is forced by his father to marry Ulmo. She throws herself into the river and, when fished out by her husband, is found to have gone mad and wanders around, dressed like a fantastic water-fairy, until the end, when she falls into the arms of the inconsolable Oberto and recovers her reason; poor Ulmo poisons himself to allow them to marry, begging Edmea for the supreme gift of a kiss on the forehead; not at once—that would be asking to much—but after his death."

Yet the true subject is Toscanini the great conductor. The reader will be fascinated by the glimpses of complexity in the character of the lower-class musician from Parma: his deep sympathy for Catalani and the eccentric painter Grubicy, his espousal and conflict with the post-Verdian school as represented antithetically by Puccini and Pizzetti, his embarrassed support of the early

socialist Mussolini and his later resistance to fascism, and generally his unflinching refusal to tolerate sloth, failure, unprincipled behavior, and stupidity. He was both an innovator and a traditionalist, a harsh disciplinarian and a selfless servant of music, a family man and a philanderer. An intimate revelation of the book is his tender solicitude for his natural son by Rosina Storchio, who after having lived "completely palsied and speechless", died at the age of sixteen. When the time is ripe, Mr. Sacchi's memoir will be one of the cornerstones of the eventual definitive biography.

[L. N.]

THE INCOMPARABLE GADDA

The most important fictional work of the season, indeed perhaps of the year, has come from a writer of the older generation, Carlo Emilio Gadda, born in 1893, or more exactly, as he puts it, fourteen days before the fall of the first Giolitti cabinet. He was better known, until now at least, in highly literate circles than among the ordinary fiction-reading public, difficult as that public may be to identify as a class, especially in Italy. This time, the support of a publisher whose commercial acumen is a trademark may have helped Gadda considerably; it remains to be seen whether his conquest of a wider public is a permanent one.

The novel confronts us, in a more emphatic form than pos-

sibly any before, with the question of the relationship between the national and the vernacular in Italian fiction. The very title, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana* (Milan: Garzanti, 1957), which can be approximately rendered as "That Ugly Mess on the Via Merulana", is not in general Italian but in local Roman speech; and so are large portions not only of the dialogue but of the narrative as well. Nor is Roman the only local parlance that is adopted here: the protagonist's regional peculiarities (his region is Molise) are taken into account; and so are the speech peculiarities of other characters. That the *pasticciaccio* of the title, referring more directly to the unsolved crimes which constitute its principal items of plot, may have a subsidiary, symbolic reference to the *pastiche* of style, is a tempting supposition. It should be added that the use of vernacular, of *some* vernacular, suggests in this writer the need for a language that he feels is richer and more pliable and expressive, rather than the simple desire to tape-record the "typical"; for instance in a previous work, *Adalgisa*, the texture of his language had been fortified by injections of Milanese. Readers of the present book especially acquainted with the individual local languages have detected questionable details in Gadda's Roman vernacular, and the same is true in passages of other local colors (there are even some lines of

Venetian); but everyone agrees that the question is artistically irrelevant. The final concoction is unique. The strong dialect elements overflow, so to speak, out of the spoken lines of dialogue and invade the normal narrative territories, the description of characters and their actions; in a sort of oblique interior speech the characters produce, as it were, the brand of narrative which relentlessly follows them.

In a rather special sense this novel could have been a thriller, or what is known in Italy as a yellow book; but there has never been a story-teller to whom the structure of suspense-and-discovery seemed to matter less, or a crime novel where final detection appeared as a more secondary concern. In fact, though there are strong suspicions, the question of who did it is unanswered. Even more, the whole plot seems like an excuse for building around it an extraordinary verbal structure and a fascinating evocation of *milieu* and time.

The *milieu* is Rome, and centrally at first a large apartment house inhabited by members of that well-to-do merchant class known locally as *il generone*. Two crimes are committed in the fated building on the via Merulana, one a burglary, with theft of jewels at the expense of a countess Menegazzi; the other, the ferocious and unexplained murder of a lady, Lilianna Balducci. Much of this is seen, after the fact, through the eyes of the police officer, head of the so-called Mobile

Squad, in charge of the investigation, Francesco ("don Ciccio") Ingravallo, the book's main character, whose speech therefore determines large sections of the narrative: the description of the body as it is found, and the subsequent pages (62 ff.) with don Ciccio's first reactions and considerations, are an unforgettable example of the way Gadda masters his "contamination" of styles. The novel is then occupied with an analysis of the police interrogations in vain search for the culprits, presenting us with that sequence of types, from investigators to young and suspect bullies, from bourgeois ladies to prostitutes, which constitutes the main bulk and the chief attraction of the work. Characters like la Zamira (p. 179 ff. and 246 ff.) or even single visions like that of Dr. Fumi coughing (p. 120) or that of don Ciccio himself emerging from his bed in the early morning (p. 322 ff.) are definitive, unquestionably successful results of Gadda's method, of his unique amalgam of the folksy and the highly literate.

The period of action is 1927, with the shadow of autocracy already thick on the political horizon; the general atmosphere is subtly conditioned by this, and the *duce* himself is frequently referred to through picturesque circumlocutions. Two such *milieu* passages, hardly translatable at all, may be as good instances as any of Gadda's various manners: "Vigeva ora il vigor nuovo del

Mascellone, Testa di Morto in bombetta, poi Emiro col fez, e col pennacchio, e la nuova castità della baronessa Malacianca-Fasulli, la nuova legge delle verghe a fascio. Pensare che ce fossero dei ladri, a Roma, ora? Co quer gallinaccio co la faccia fanatica a Palazzo Chiggi? Cor Federzoni che voleva carcerà pe forza tutti li storcioni de lungotevere? e quanno che se sbaciucchiavono ar cinema? tutti li cani in fregola de la Lungara? Cor Papa milanese e co l'Anno Santo de du anni prima? E co li sposi novelli? Co li polli novelli a scarpinà pe tutta Roma?" (p. 81). And a little later on a very different linguistic vein: "Le nuove forze operanti nella società italiana quel rinnovamento profondo che, atteggiatosi alla antica severità o almeno alla faccia severa de' littori, aveva però già preso l'aire dalla loro dotazione di bastoncelli . . . si addiedero poi senza sciuparsi nei filosofemi (*primum vivere*) a lastricare de' più verbosi buoni propositi la patente via dell'inferno. Gassificate indi a funeraria minaccia e fattesi verbo e vento. . . ." and so on, the narrator in this case having started on his literate and occasionally mock-antiquated and mock-scientific vein. Space does not allow to go into Gadda's biography and career; a relative late-comer to the world of letters, he started his life, and lived a good part of it, as an engineer.

In the ordinary sense, as we have indicated, the *Pasticciac-*

cio presents no conclusion. While plot-wise this could be entirely acceptable, some readers have justifiably deplored here a final impression of formlessness. A not uncommon reaction is that the reader is confronted with a series of set pieces. But discussion on this work has been, and will continue to be, lively and fruitful. On the whole, it seems that Gadda will remain as an extraordinarily attractive and original case, rather than as a more usable lesson in how to solve some of the problems (in language, in relation to milieu, etc.) that are peculiar to the Italian novelist of our time. [P. M. P.]

PIRANDELLO IN PAPERBACK

Everyman's Library has a habit of transformation: first it was a change in binding, then in size, and now the inevitable, a new series of paperbacks. Among the first ten titles is Pirandello, *Naked Masks*, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Dutton): five plays, including *Liola*, together with the preface (1925) to *Six Characters*, an introduction, a biographical summary, and a good selective bibliography. The introduction is directed against the emphasis often placed on Pirandello's "ideas" in isolation from his plays. Pirandello is not propounding "ideas" but rather presenting dramatically a view of the world and of particular instances of humanity in his characters. "There is nothing

in world drama resembling such characters," writes Mr. Bentley. "They fall from the sky, they are whirled hither and yon, they cry out in anguish, they sink into the ground. But is not this, in its way, highly dramatic?" Especially good and suggestive are the editor's remarks on Pirandello's dramatic rhetoric. "His strongest weapon is his prose. Its torrential eloquence and pungent force are unique in the whole range of modern drama. . . . He gets effects which one would not have thought possible to colloquial prose. . . ." Not only the contemporary critic, but also the practicing dramatist should be alerted.

One may hope that Archibald Colquhoun's excellent translation of *I promessi sposi*, in hardcover Everyman's Library since 1956, may be given a softer back and price, and so made readily available to the traveler, the drugstore browser, and especially those in charge of college courses in the European novel: the reader of English may now for the first time read a decent and complete version of Manzoni.

[L. N.]

THE LUXURY OF TEARS

Children of the Shadows (Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1957), by the Australian writer, Morris L. West, is an excellent piece of reportage. His subject is the *scugnizzi* of Naples, the homeless children who learn from the age of seven or so to keep themselves

alive by their wits, scavenging, pimping, begging, stealing, literally anything. It is, of course, part of the interminable history of the martyrdom of children: not those who are covertly tortured at home, but rather those who are deprived, for all to see, of shelter, food, dignity, not to mention love, through what amounts to a conspiracy of society. In the absence of governmental interest, adequate private or ecclesiastical charity, a plucky priest, Mario Borelli, after obtaining the permission of Cardinal Ascalesi, disguised himself as a *scugnizzo*, gained the confidence of a band of urchins, and became in effect a missionary in the midst of Naples. It was only after months of living their degraded life that he felt he could risk revealing his true identity as a priest, overcome their worldly fear and suspicion, and lead them from their naked existence into a refuge he had fashioned from a bombed-out church, a place they would be free to frequent, where they could find food and shelter without obligation, where eventually they might come to know companionship, security, trust, and even Christ. That, Padre Borelli's mission, is the core of the book; and that, apparently, is just about the way things stand today.

What is it that causes and perpetuates such horrifying poverty and loneliness and

brutality? According to the author, it is a web of governmental corruption and mismanagement, the indifference or exploitation of the rich, the conservatism and even the puritanism of the southern Church. Since he finds the situation an impasse, apart from the efforts of valiant people, very few, like Padre Borelli, Mr. West would propose, in brief, that the children, the *scugnizzi*, be got out of the hopeless sink of Naples and sent to the still growing frontiers of the world, to Canada, the United States, Australia, Africa, where they could be trained to live useful, wholesome, independent lives. But, as of the time of writing his book, he had found little concrete encouragement; the American consul in Naples, for example, confined himself to reiterating the sacrosanct quota of 5,645 per annum. Actually, it is clear that he must depend upon the effect of his book to arouse interest and raise funds. It could be a mission for Americans of Italian descent to look back upon the long, often humiliating, struggle up from degradation, and not in denial but in proud acknowledgment of their forebears, to dedicate their efforts to the redemption of the helpless *scugnizzi* of Naples. The reader of this book may often be moved to tears. The homeless urchin of Naples soon learns to dispense with that luxury. [L. N.]

ITEMS

NOBEL PRIZE WINNER this year in physiology and medicine, as announced October 24, is Daniel Bovet, of Swiss origin but at present of Italian nationality, indeed, married to the daughter of Francesco Saverio Nitti. It was his particular excellence to develop derivatives of curare (the strange paralyzing drug used to poison arrows by otherwise backward South American Indians) which then could be administered to relax muscles during surgery. Moreover, he has helped in deriving anti-histamines for the relief of allergies and at least the symptoms of the all too common cold. At present Dr. Bovet is at work in his Roman laboratory on tranquilizers (already known in Italy as *tranquillanti*) and drugs to hasten childbirth.

A SUPERHIGHWAY NETWORK in Italy, after years of projects and delay, is now under intense construction. It will reach north and south from Milan to Naples (la Strada del Sole), and east and west from Genoa to Venice. These, the main axes, have full

priority. Subsidiary highways—for instance, from Naples to Bari and from Naples to Reggio Calabria—will also be constructed. Indeed, the latter branch would be extended, over the planned bridge between the Peninsula and Sicily, all the way to Palermo. One cannot contemplate indifferently the possible literary consequences of such a highway: the Scylla-Carybdis metaphor will be dealt, in the spirit of cliché, a mortal blow; besides, a more commodious way will be open to the customary Sicilians who have tended to write much of the literature and run on many occasions the government of Italy.

Speed will be no object. From Florence to Capua there will be a limit of eighty miles an hour, but all the rest of the way the throttle may be open to a hundred. Indeed, the ideal motorist, avoiding the Scylla of cockiness and the Carybdis of pokiness, should be able to make it from Milan to Naples in six hours; for those in no hurry to pile Pelion on Ossa, the journey could be contemplated as a pleasant day's jaunt.

AN OPERATIC VERSION of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* will be presented at La Scala in February of 1958. It issues from the experienced hands of Ildebrando Pizzetti as *L'Assassinio nella cattedrale*. By rapid count, it will be the seventy-seven year old composer's nineteenth musical drama.

A DEFINITIVE two-volume biography of *Paganini: the Genoese* by G. I. C. de Courcy has just been published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

ON SEPTEMBER 16 the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi, whose still-life paintings of bottles, flagons, cruets, glasses and the like have become an archetypal instance of artistic self-limitation, received the São Paulo Prize in plastic arts. Both the local museum and the Brazilian government cooperate in sponsoring the award of about 4,000 dollars.

A MUSICAL RENDITION of Sem Benelli's *La cena delle beffe* ("The Jest") is in all likelihood to be presented soon in New York. It will be based on the English version of the play by Royce Emerson, first produced in 1919 with John and Lionel Barrymore.

AT THE VENICE Film Festival the Gold Lion was granted

this year to an Indian picture "Aparajito," which narrates a young man's progress up from ignorance and squalor. Luchino Visconti's film "Le Notti Bianche" (Sleepless Nights), starring Maria Schell, received the Silver Lion as second prize.

Other Italian pictures currently in progress are: "Lo Uomo di Paglia" (The Straw Man) directed by Pietro Germi; "La Sfida" (The Challenge) directed by Francesco Rosi; "Un Ettaro di Cielo" (An Acre of Sky) directed by Aglauro Casadio; "Salviamo i Panorami" (Let's Save the Scenery) directed by Alessandro Blasetti, with Vittorio De Sica and Gino Cervi; "Una Diva in Vacanza" (A Star on Vacation) directed by Mario Soldati, with Mamie Van Doren.

In anticipation of the release and distribution of new Italian films, one may contemplate the present circulation in this country of Franco-Italian productions such as "It Happened in the Park" with Vittorio De Sica, Eduardo De Filippo, Micheline Presle, Anna Maria Ferrero and others (written by the symptomatically literary constellation of Sergio Amidei, Giorgio Bassani, Ennio Flaiano and Ercole Patti); and "Passionate Summer," a French film version of Ugo Betti's *Isola delle capre*, which had extraordinary success on the Parisian stage and which two seasons ago on Broadway barely managed to make its hasty exit gracefully.

Cinecittà and Hollywood (both designations are symbol-

ically parallel) continue to depend on each other. It takes no effort to imagine that Tennessee Williams' comedy "The Bluebird," now being written expressly for Anna Magnani, will soon, after its stage presentation this fall, be translated to the screen. Though it has been a fallow season for American super-epics produced with Roman men-in-the-street, there appears no reason to think that the trade-mark lion is not still thirsty for the blood of the martyrs. On the level of diplomacy and commerce, two events seem to further fraternization between the two celluloid communities. On the occasion of the Film Festival, the city of Venice recently presented Los Angeles with a glass gondola filled with water from the Grand Canal. At the same time, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Italian entrepreneurs have opened the first outdoor movie theatre in Europe, the "Metro Drive-in Cine," twenty kilometers from Rome along the road to Ostia. Spectators on motor scooters pay 300 lire, those in automobiles somewhat more.



GAETANO SALVEMINI died on September 6. The most fearless and obstinate of the Italian intellectuals forced by fascism to leave Italy, Professor Salvemini, historian, educator, liberal, was well known in America where he spent many of his years of political exile. After teaching at several universities in Italy, in 1925 he resigned his post at the University of

Florence. Released after a short imprisonment he left Italy without a passport, vowing to return only when there would be once again "a government worthy of a civilized country."

He went to France, then to England, and finally in 1933 he settled in the United States as Lauro De Bosis Lecturer in Italian Civilization at Harvard. From abroad he continued his unrelenting opposition to fascism, and his name became a rallying symbol, inside and outside of Italy, for those who hoped and fought for the return of freedom. He has left a large number of historical writings of undisputed importance. But to those who have known and admired him the image which remains most vivid in their memory is that of the man rather than the scholar. This image has been aptly described by Hamilton Fish Armstrong in a letter to the New York Times (Sept. 11): "Salvemini was a man quite without fear. But the fearlessness that makes some men mere bravos was joined in him with a rectitude, a childlike innocence, a gaiety, a spontaneity which never let him hesitate for even an instant between right and wrong; he simply didn't know that a choice existed."

An atheist, who had the greatest respect for other people's sincere religious beliefs, he met his end without fear. His last words on his death bed as reported by his friend Ernesto Rossi, are both a testament and a fitting epilogue to his life: "You have no idea

how glad I am to die this way. Having a clear conscience is the only thing that matters . . . To die smiling; that's what I should like . . . Just for curiosity, I would like to know the moment of passage from life to death . . . I don't understand why people are so afraid to die . . . I have been lucky with my friends during my lifetime and I am lucky in this respect even at my death . . . I could not have had a more serene, happy end than this, surrounded by my friends near and far, . . . I should like to embrace all of you . . . I am at the end of the line . . . ”

●

PONTE SANTA TRINITA in Florence is finally rebuilt and in use. For thirteen years, since the Germans blew it up, the Florentines have been waiting for one of the most beautiful landmarks of their city to be restored. With money raised in the United States and Italy, and with a patience that only love could inspire, the bridge has been rebuilt stone by stone. Century old documents were consulted and an abandoned quarry was reopened to obtain the same stone that Bartolomeo Ammannati, the original architect, used in 1567.

●

THE “ANTAGONIST” of Italian literary and journalistic circles, Leo Longanesi, died in early October. This epithet given him by Alberto Moravia, who knew him well, describes the life, work, and character of

the man. Small, aggressive, witty, and temperamental, Leo Longanesi was a fighter. The essence of his life was in the things he fought against rather than what he believed and loved.

He began to write in 1924 for *Il Selvaggio*. In 1926 he made his first appearance on the editorial scene by founding *L'Italiano*. In 1937 he started another review *Omnibus*, the first rotogravure publication in Italy. Although he did not have any immediate imitators, Longanesi had set the stage and he is considered the precursor of the rotogravure publications that have flooded Italy since World War II. In the last few years and up to the time of his death Longanesi had directed still another periodical *Il borghese*.

A conservative at heart, Longanesi could be called the last paladin of the provincial bourgeoisie of the 19th century. In all the reviews he directed he was inspired by this predilection even if his activity was always directed against true or imaginary enemies of his ideal world rather than toward the eulogy of that same world. That he happened to be active before, during and after fascism is only incidental, and his relation with that party must be viewed in that light. In the early years of fascism he supported this movement in *L'Italiano* because he considered it as the only saviour of his middle class world. Later, disappointed by the Italian fascist middle class, he attacked it

with all the satiric pungency that only internecine struggles bring forth. After the war with the threat of communism he once again undertook the defense of the bourgeoisie in *Il borghese*.

An intelligent and creative individual, Longanesi was a true artist in his own right as a designer and a printer. His publications always bore the touch of the artist in the covers, the pagination, the illustrations and the general design. His caustic humor, his keen perception, and his exuberant vitality amazed friend and foe. Could he have channeled these assets into a constructive and positive approach, his work would have been much more significant than his grantedly picturesque, but largely negative efforts.



THE LITERARY PRIZE season for 1957 has just about come to an end revealing that the year has been one of great activity. Among the most important prizes and their respective recipients and works are the following:

The Viareggio Prize. Fiction: Arturo Tofanelli, *L'uomo d'oro* (The Man of Gold). Italo Calvino, *Il barone rampante* (The Rampant Baron). Natalia Ginzburg, *Valentino*. *Poetry:* Sandro Penna, *Poesie* (Poems). Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (Gramsci's Ashes). Alberto Mondadori, *Quasi una vicenda* (Almost a Change). (For these and other poets see *Trends*.) *First Published Work:*

Felice Vecchio, *La chiesa di Canneto* (Canneto's Church). Maria Giacobbe, *Diario di una maestra* (Diary of a Teacher). Angelo Maglianno, *La borghesia e la paura* (The Middle-Class and Fear). *Non-Fiction:* Marcello Venturoli, *La patria di marmo* (The Fatherland in Marble). (See *Books*.) Dino del Bo, *La volontà dello stato* (The Will of the State). Danilo Dolci, *Inchiesta a Palermo* (Investigation in Palermo). The unusually large number of awards was somewhat of a surprise and caused a great deal of comment. The Honorary Prize was awarded to Umberto Saba. (See first article).

The Trebbo Poetico Prize of Cervia. Awarded to Elena Vannoni for an unpublished collection of poems to appear soon in Mondadori's collection *Lo Specchio* in an anthology titled *I poeti del Trebbo Poetico—Cervia 1957*.

The Chianciano Prize. To Titta Rosa, *Poesie di una vita* (Poems of a lifetime).

The Salento Prize. To Ignazio Silone, *Il segreto di Luca* (Luca's Secret) (See *I.Q. I, 1, Items*.)

The Marzotto Prize. *Prose:* Umberto Saba, *Ricordi-Racconti* (Memories—Tales). *Poetry:* Mario Luzi, *Onore del vero* (The Honor of Truth). *Drama:* Luigi Squarzina, *Romagnola* (The Girl from Romagna).

The Strega Prize. To Elsa Morante, *L'isola di Arturo* (Arthur's Island) (See *I.Q. I, 1, Items*).

The Cittadella Prize. To Angelo Barile, *Quasi sereno* (Almost Clear).

The Mario Colombi Guidotti Prize. To Leone Piccioni, *Tradizione letteraria e idee correnti* (Literary Tradition and Current Ideas).



AMONG BOOKS new and forthcoming, those that follow should tease the Italophile: Italo Calvino, *The Path to the Nest of Spiders*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun (Boston: Beacon Press); Ercole Patti, *A Roman Affair*, translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon (New York: William Sloane Associates); Mario Praz, *The Flaming Heart: Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli and Other Studies of the Relations between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books); Walter Friedlaender, *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting* (New York: Columbia UP); Franco Proserpi, *Lord of the Sharks*, translated by C. and G. Roatti (New York: Roy); Ugo Betti, *Three Plays (The Queen and the Rebels, The Burnt Flowerbed, and Summertime)*, translated by Henry Reed (England); H. G. Wright, *Boccaccio in England from Chaucer to Tennyson* (England); Stendhal, *A Roman Journal*, translated by H. Chevalier (New York: Orion Press; excellently illustrated with tinted etchings of early nineteenth-century Rome).



THAT GIACOMO CASANOVA has been chiefly known for the wrong reasons has long been maintained by students of his life. A new, important contribution comes from Gino Damerini, long a student of eighteenth-century Venice, with his book *Casanova a Venezia dopo il primo esilio* ("Casanova in Venice After the First Exile," Turin: ILTE, 1957). Sumptuously printed and profusely illustrated, the book proposes to reconstruct, largely on unpublished documentation, the life of a man "interesting in many respects, and sometimes wrongly judged."



ALTHOUGH GUIDO CAVALCANTI is one of the most fascinating figures in early Italian poetry (and has attracted in the English-reading world such diverse and influential writers as Ezra Pound and James Joyce), a modern critical edition of his works was overdue. The lacuna has now been filled by the text of Cavalcanti's *Rime* with complete critical apparatus, edited by Guido Favati and published by Ricciardi of Naples. The volume is the first of a series, *Documenti di Filologia*, under the general editorship of Alfredo Schiaffini and Gianfranco Contini.



AT LAST SOMETHING is being done about the majestic villas along the Brenta and in other places in the Veneto. Some years ago an exposition of greatly enlarged photographs

circulated through the cities of Italy; admission charges could hardly amount to more than temporary aid. Now the Government has appropriated more than three million dollars to be spent in the next ten years in order to stop the total delapidation of the more than 1,500 villas. Many have already deteriorated shockingly, as the photographs revealed: prosperous farmers have turned elegant drawing rooms, with frescoes by Veronese or the ubiquitous Tiepolo, into stables and dormitories for farmhands. Surely, with imaginative "promotion," the Brenta could be made a second Loire.



WE LAMENT the recent death of Erich Auerbach, a gentle and learned scholar, who devoted so much of his love and brilliance to the Italian classics. Not only was he, in his early days, the translator and illuminating commentator of Vico for Germans, but also he composed one of the greatest works of Dante criticism in this century, *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (1929). His *Neue Dantestudien* (Istanbul, later Zurich and New York, 1944) further enlightened his readers as to the mode of existence of the figures in the *Divine Comedy*. The fundamental study "Figura," for example, suggested that the traditional fourfold interpretation of the *Comedy*, according to Dante's own scheme, was hardly accurate in describing the aesthetic actuality. To cite an

instance: "Virgil, then, is not an allegorical representation of a quality or virtue or ability or power, or even of an historical institution. He is neither Reason nor Poetry nor Empire. He is Virgil himself; but not of course in the way in which later writers have tried to reproduce a human figure in the intricacy of its inner development: as, say, Shakespeare evoked Julius Caesar or Schiller evoked Wallenstein. They reveal their historical figures in their actual earthly existence, they conjure up before our eyes a significant episode in that existence, and attempt to expound its meaning from that alone. For Dante, the meaning of such an existence is explained, has its place in Providential world history, which will be explained in the Vision of the *Comedy*, after it has already, in its general features, become part of the revelation granted every Christian. So Virgil is indeed the historical Virgil, but he is also no longer just that; for the historical Virgil is only the *figura* of the fulfilled Truth revealed by the poem, and this fulfillment is more — it is more real, more significant—than the *figura*." Elsewhere, for example in *Mimesis* and his lecture *Typologische Motive in der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Krefeld, 1953), Erich Auerbach elaborated and emphasized his views on interpreting not only Dante but also a good part of medieval literature.

His richest, most suggestive, and best known work is *Mimesis*.

is (Bern, 1946; Princeton, 1953; Anchor Books, 1957), subtitled "The Representation of Reality in Western Literature," ranges through the centuries from Homer to the present. In method, linking detail in its most intimate particularity and philological exactness with general reflections and deductions concerning literature, aesthetics and taste, it presents a richness and originality seldom achieved by a single sensibility. Its author was, in fact, one of the three or four greatest exemplars of that great tradition of *romanische Philologie* in Germany, which was largely suppressed in the homeland and which lately has suffered the blows of mortality. Like so many great books, it left much unsaid, undefended, unexplored. Yet it gains in opening outward on the whole of literature. It was, apart from its incontestable accomplishments, a program for the future: literary "reality" (not "realism"), the threefold division of stylistic levels, the medieval interpretation (*Figuraldeutung*) of Biblical and literary texts, indeed, the whole developmental history of western literature.

Erich Auerbach's meditations began at the roots, with the Ancients and with Dante, and they inevitably returned to the roots. At his death he was at work on a comprehensive study of medieval Latin literature and the

interpretative tradition. We can only hope that he has left us an even richer inheritance than we could reasonably expect.

PIER LUIGI NERVI, Italian engineer, has been awarded the Frank P. Brown Medal by the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia. Well known in Italy, Nervi is now acquiring a worldwide reputation as an engineer and architect. This year the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters elected him an honorary member and called him "one of the world's most renowned architects." Nervi was one of the designers of the new UNESCO headquarters in Paris and his many concrete buildings in Italy have caused a minor revolution in the field. *The Works of Pier Luigi Nervi*, by Italian architect Ernesto Rogers (Praeger), is now being published in the United States.

ON THE 200th Anniversary of his birth, the Italian neoclassic sculptor, Antonio Canova, has been honored in Venice by art historians gathered from all over Europe to discuss problems of Canova and generally of the art which he represented. The inaugural address was delivered by Mario Praz, Italy's foremost student and enthusiast of neo-classical taste.

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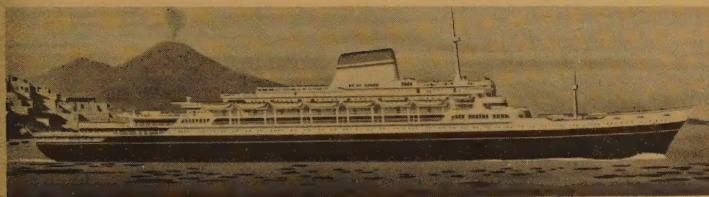
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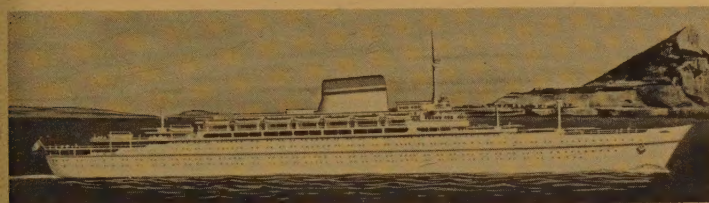
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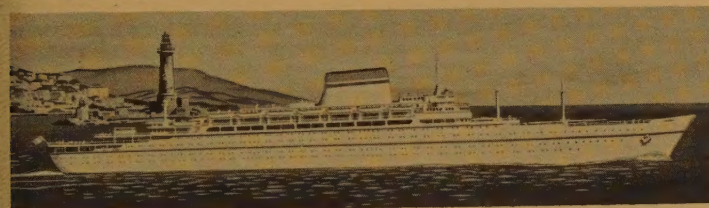
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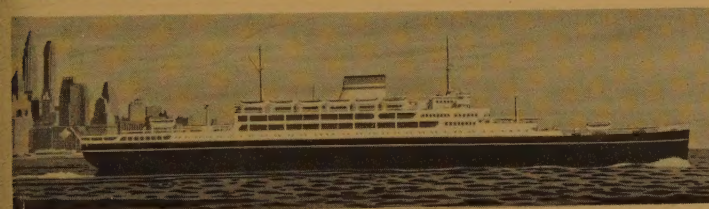
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